



IT'S A JOB.

Evon says...
“that’s why they
call it **artwork.**”





THE TEXT

Writers will think of a story that they want to tell. They will have to think about characters and plot and what message they want readers to understand. They will envision a scene but try to show it through their words.

RESEARCH

Illustrators might need to do research while working on a book project. Some artists look at dozens of photos in books and on the internet to learn the anatomy of animals, or the style of image they are drawn to. Others might visit the library, or ask kids to pose in a chair or jump in puddles, or they might try to envision all the different kinds of smiles that a face makes.



The story of *Benny's Flag*, that Jim illustrated, tells the true story of Benny Benson, who designed the Alaska flag when he was 13 years old. It was a statewide contest for students, and in this illustration, you can see other entries held up by kids. Those drawings were collected and stored in the State Historical Library, where researchers can find them today.

ALASKA CONNECTION ANIMALS

Many books include animals, and Alaskan artists often draw animals that live in Alaska. If there are only a small number of animals, can you imagine how an artist might deal with drawing the same animals over and over again? How many ways are there to draw a bear?

Evon says...

"We draw about what we know. We care about our Alaskan animals and how they are important to our culture."



Clockwise from top right: black bear by Michaela Goade, brown bear by Mitch Watley, polar bear by Jim Fowler, polar bear by Evon Zerbetz.



THE SKETCHES

All artists work differently, but it seems they all have this in common. They have to try an idea a few different ways before they decide on the way that works the best, or conveys the idea the way they want. Often artists will make sketches using pencil and paper, or sometimes the computer.

Artists approach this differently, but they all want to explore different perspectives before they spend the time making the final illustration just the way they want it. These are rough sketches—they don't spend a lot of time making each one perfect, but try to draw them quickly to get the ideas out.

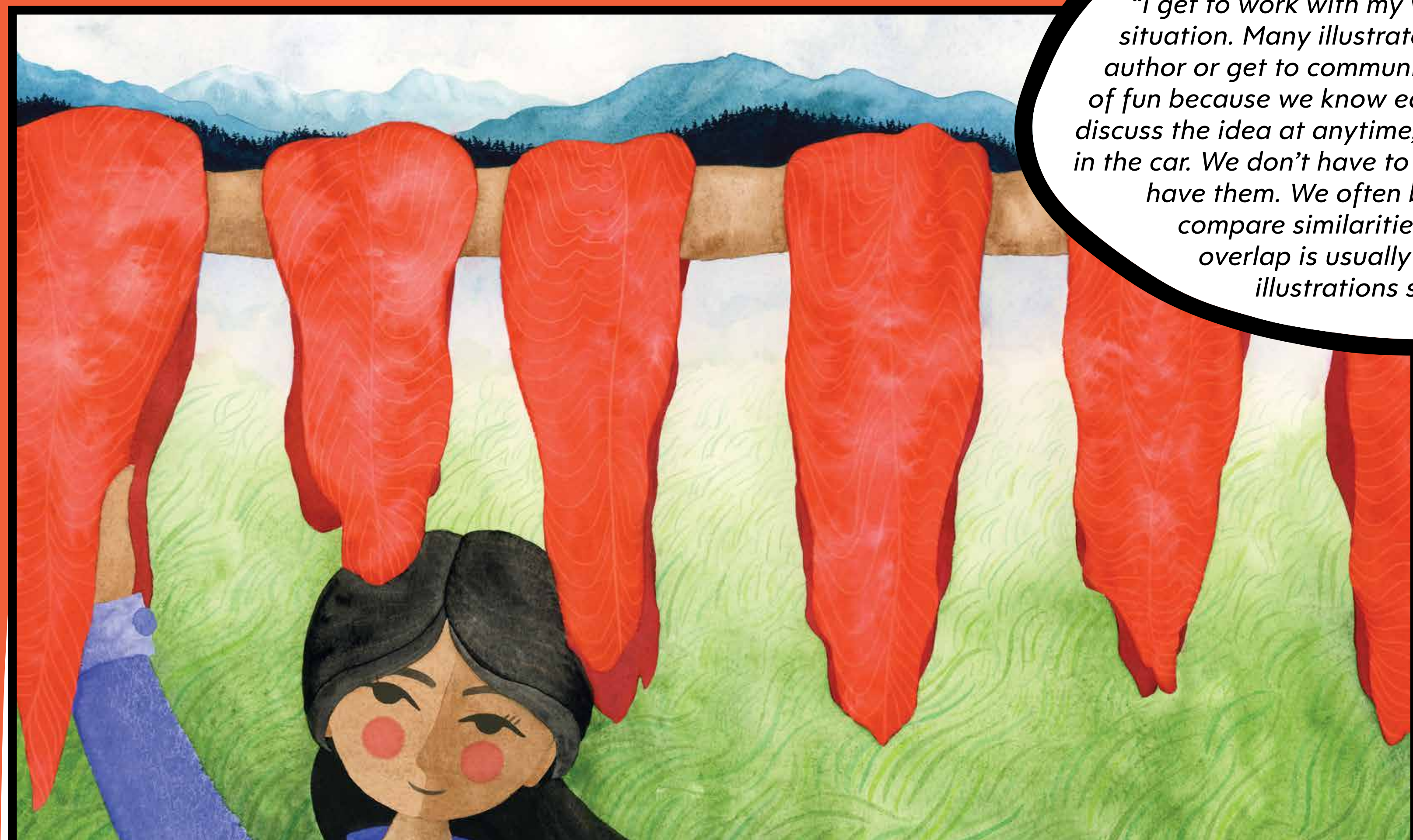
COLLABORATION

Creating a picture book is a collaboration among many different people, and each project can be different. Usually an author will submit a story to a publisher, and the publisher will choose the artist to illustrate the book. There might be an author, an illustrator, a designer who lays out the book, an editor who helps with the text, an art director who helps with how the words and pictures flow together, and then of course there are people who print the book and sell the book and read the book. It can take the involvement of a lot of people before a finished



book ends up in your hands. Sometimes we call a collaboration a marriage, but it doesn't always mean people. A marriage can be the combination of elements, like words and pictures, or the publisher and the book.

In this case, both Jim and Mitch collaborate on books that their wives have written. If you look closely in Jim's books, you may find a cherished stuffed elephant that belongs to his wife, Susi. He has included her childhood friend in several of their books.



ALASKA CONNECTION INDIGENOUS STORIES

Michaela Goade is a Tlingit artist from the Kiks.ádi Clan. She has illustrated both traditional and contemporary stories for Sealaska Heritage Institute's publishing program, Baby Raven Reads, including *Raven and the Tide Lady* and *Shanyaak'utlaax – Salmon Boy*.

Rosita Worl, President of Sealaska Heritage Institute, is happy to publish Baby Raven Reads books: "Today parents and children can read and learn about the lives and cultures of the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian of Southeast Alaska."

Mitch says...

"I get to work with my wife, which is a unique situation. Many illustrators don't even meet the author or get to communicate with them. It's a lot of fun because we know each other well and we can discuss the idea at anytime, over breakfast or lunch or in the car. We don't have to schedule meetings, we just have them. We often both do sketches and compare similarities. Where the ideas overlap is usually the direction the illustrations should take."

Michaela says...

"Following the artist path has enabled me to reconnect with my culture, a true gift that has become both an anchor and a north star. It's been an incredibly enriching experience and I'll keep learning and working to honor the culture and Tribe."

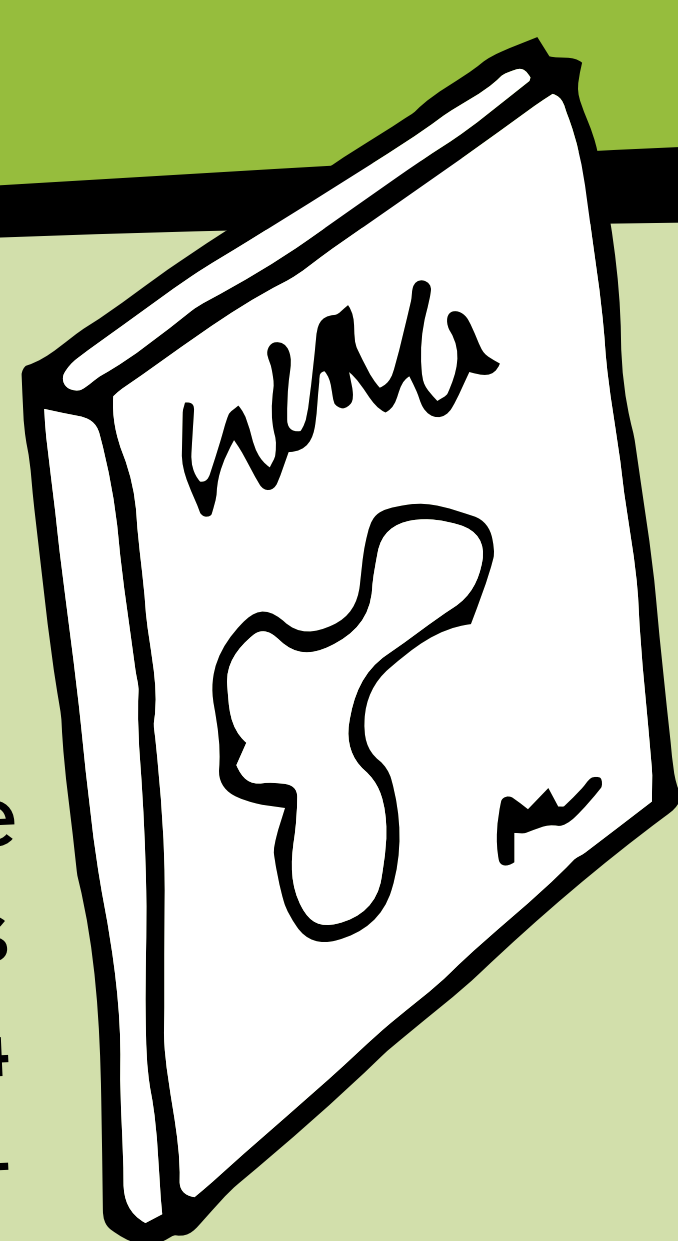
THE FINALS

After all that hard work deciding on colors and perspective and facial expression and where the text will fit with the composition, it's time to finalize.

These will go to the publisher who will lay out the book with text and images. For Mitch and Michaela, final touches happen on the computer. After doing some of the work by hand and scanning, they manipulate the art on the screen. For Jim, it's usually acrylic or watercolor that he uses to create a final painting to go to the publisher. Evon will make a print from her block of linoleum, and then add color with colored pencil or watercolor.

32 PAGES

Children's books have 32 pages. Almost always! That's because of the way a piece of paper is folded in half, and each side is a page. So one piece of paper becomes 4 pages of the book. That means that a 32-page picture book is printed on 8 pieces of folded paper. Because that limits the way you tell your story, authors and illustrators have to think about what piece of text and what images go on each page.

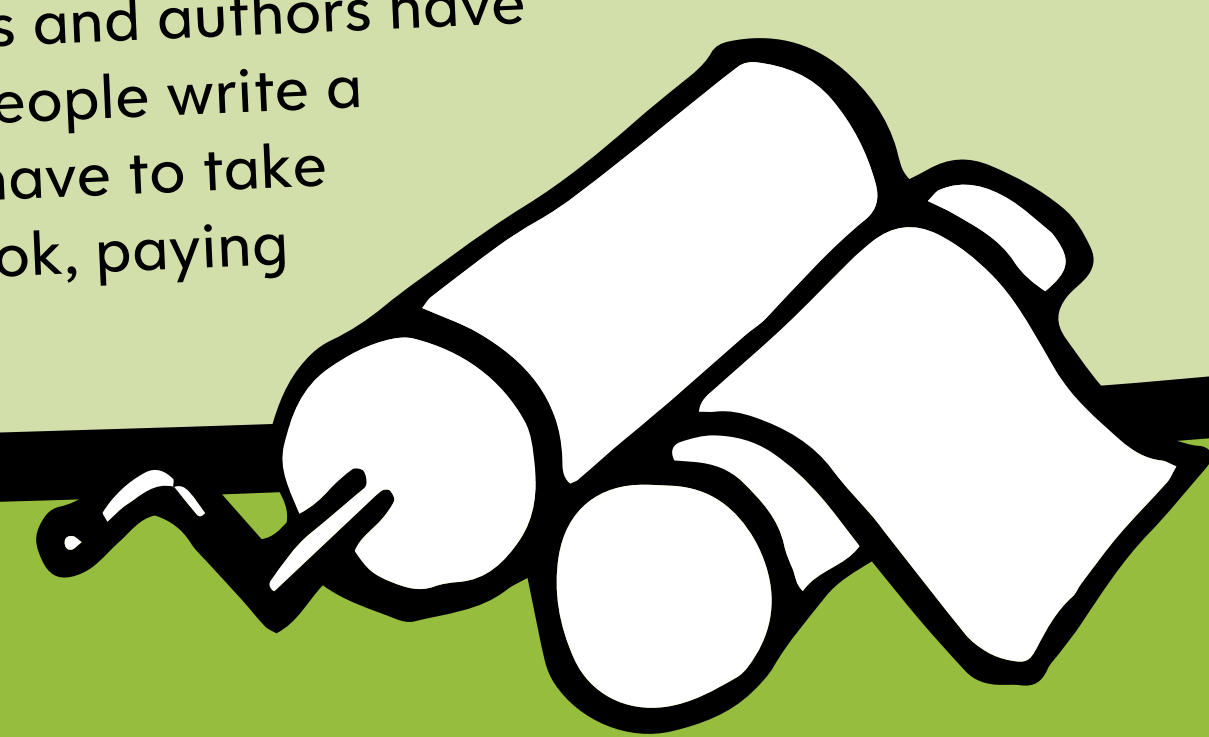


PRINTING

After all of that work, there is still a good deal of waiting. When a picture book gets printed, there will often be thousands of books made. Many publishers get books printed in different countries, so they will have to be put on a boat and sent back.

SELF-PUBLISHING

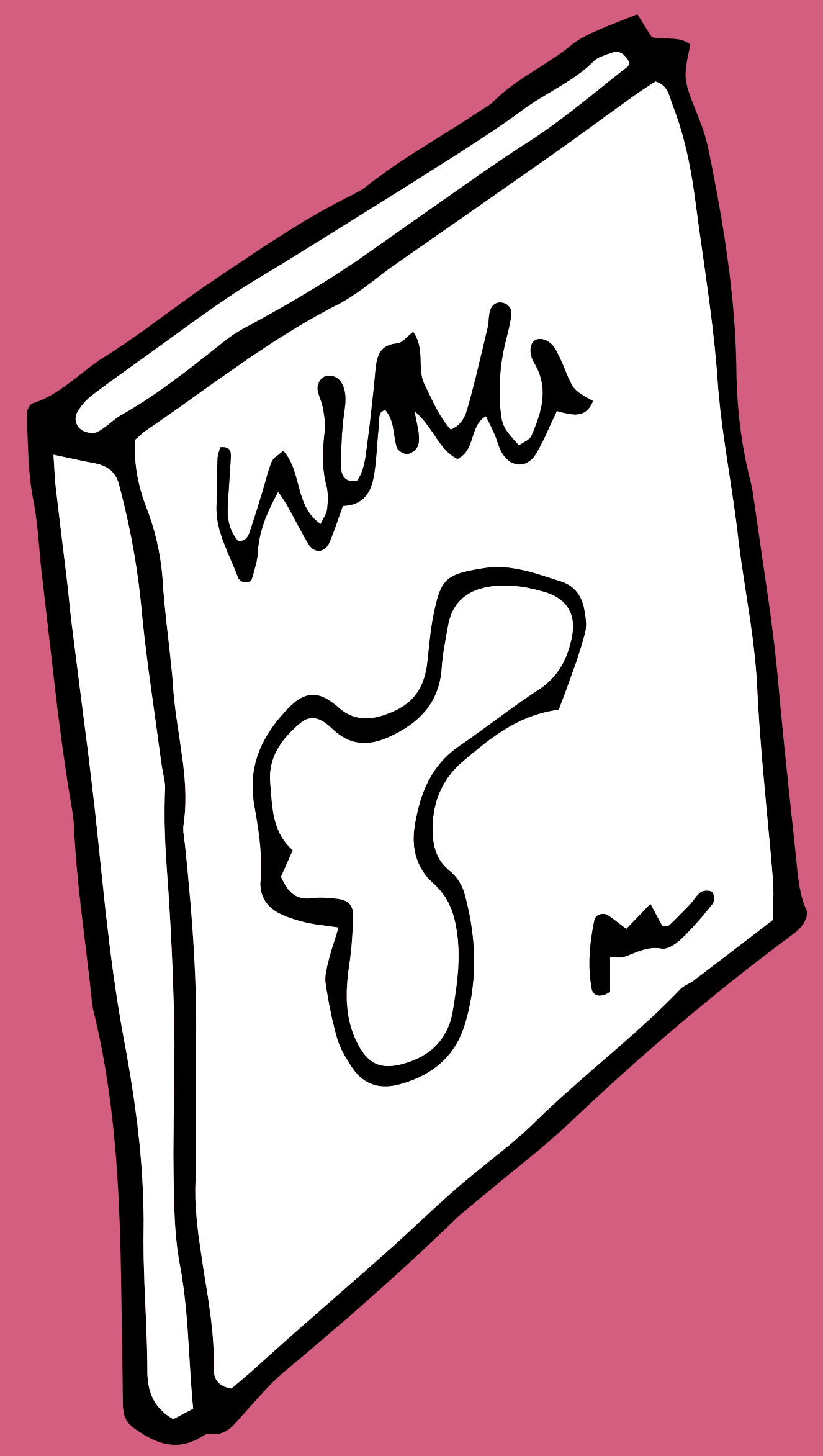
What about doing it yourself? There are different ways to go about publishing a book without approaching a publisher and selling them your idea. Some artists and authors have agents, who take their ideas to publishers for them. And some people write a book and end up publishing it themselves, but that means they have to take on all the roles that the publisher usually does: designing the book, paying to print it, selling it to stores, and storing all those books.



IT'S WORK.

How much would you have to draw to fill up this jar of pencil nubs?

Photo by Evon Zerbetz



THE BOOK

Hopefully, everyone is happy with the final artwork at this point. The editors and designers and art directors have weighed in, and perhaps asked the artist to make some changes. But once the final pieces are in the hands of the publisher, it's time to wait.

DUMMY

We know we're not supposed to call people dummies, but when referring to a book, a dummy is a term for a mock-up, or a version of the whole book in its draft form. The words might be placed on the pages, and the illustrator can see how their images work with the text, and how the story reads as you turn the page. It's another tool to help visualize the final product.

MICHAELA'S AWARD

There is a very special award reserved for illustrators of children's books, and only one person wins it each year. In 2021, Michaela Goade, who illustrated *We Are Water Protectors*, was given this honor.

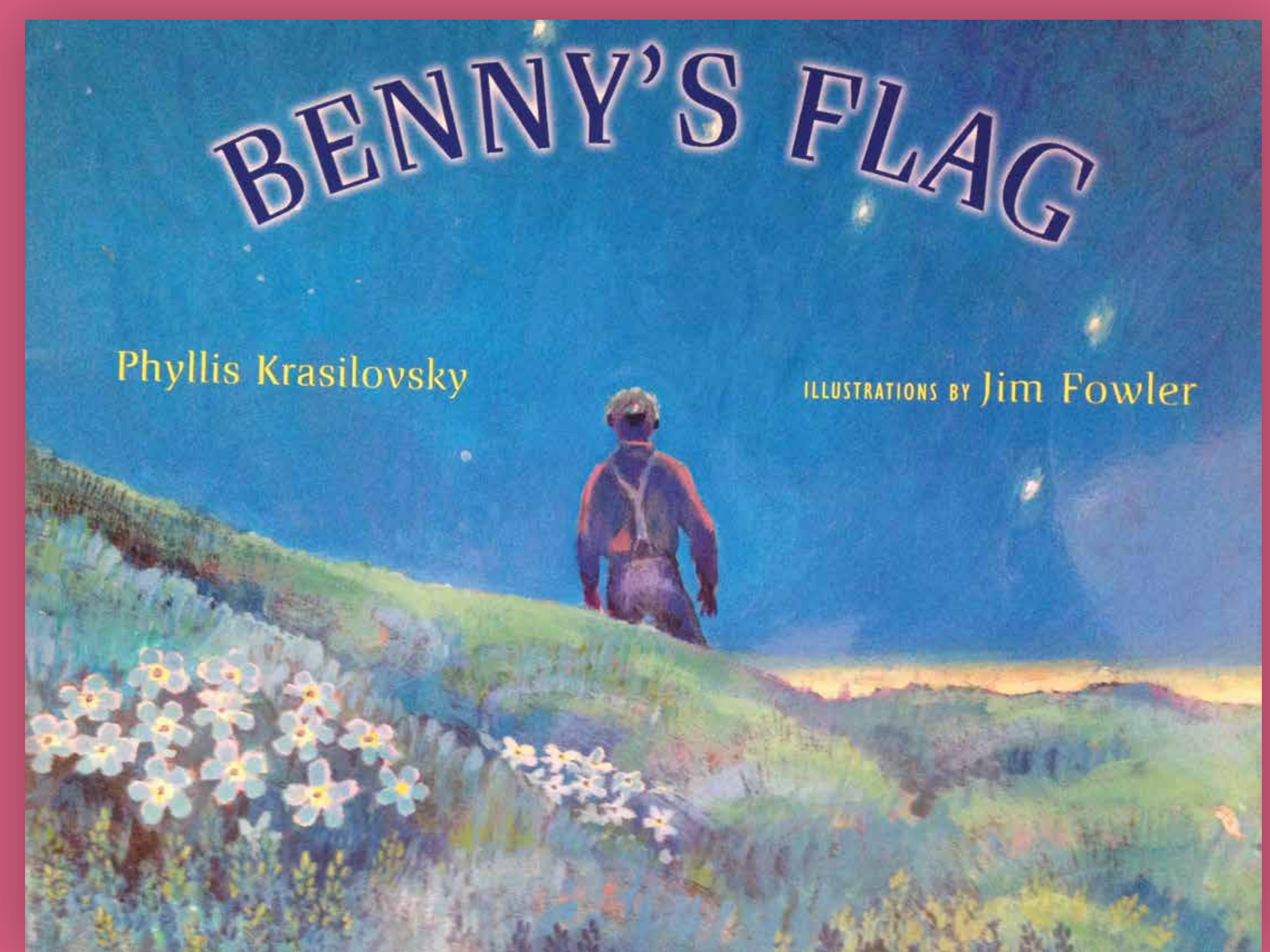
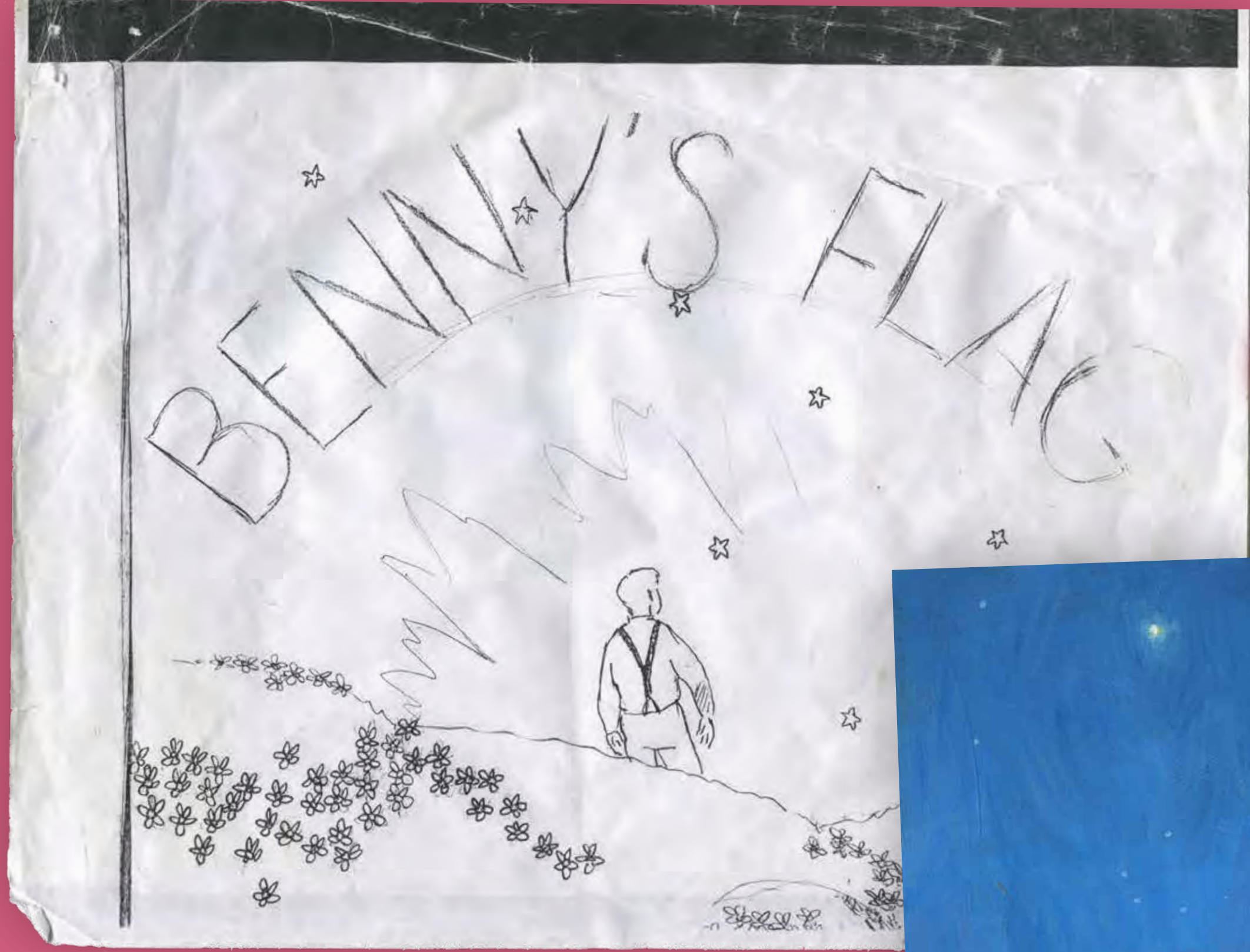


ALASKA CONNECTION TOURISM

A large industry in Alaska is tourism. People come from all over the world to learn about the people and wildlife of this state. If publishers want to create books to sell to tourists, what choices would they make in selecting a book to publish?

In Jim Fowler's illustration from *Patsy Ann*, a loyal dog meets passengers who arrive in Juneau by steamship.

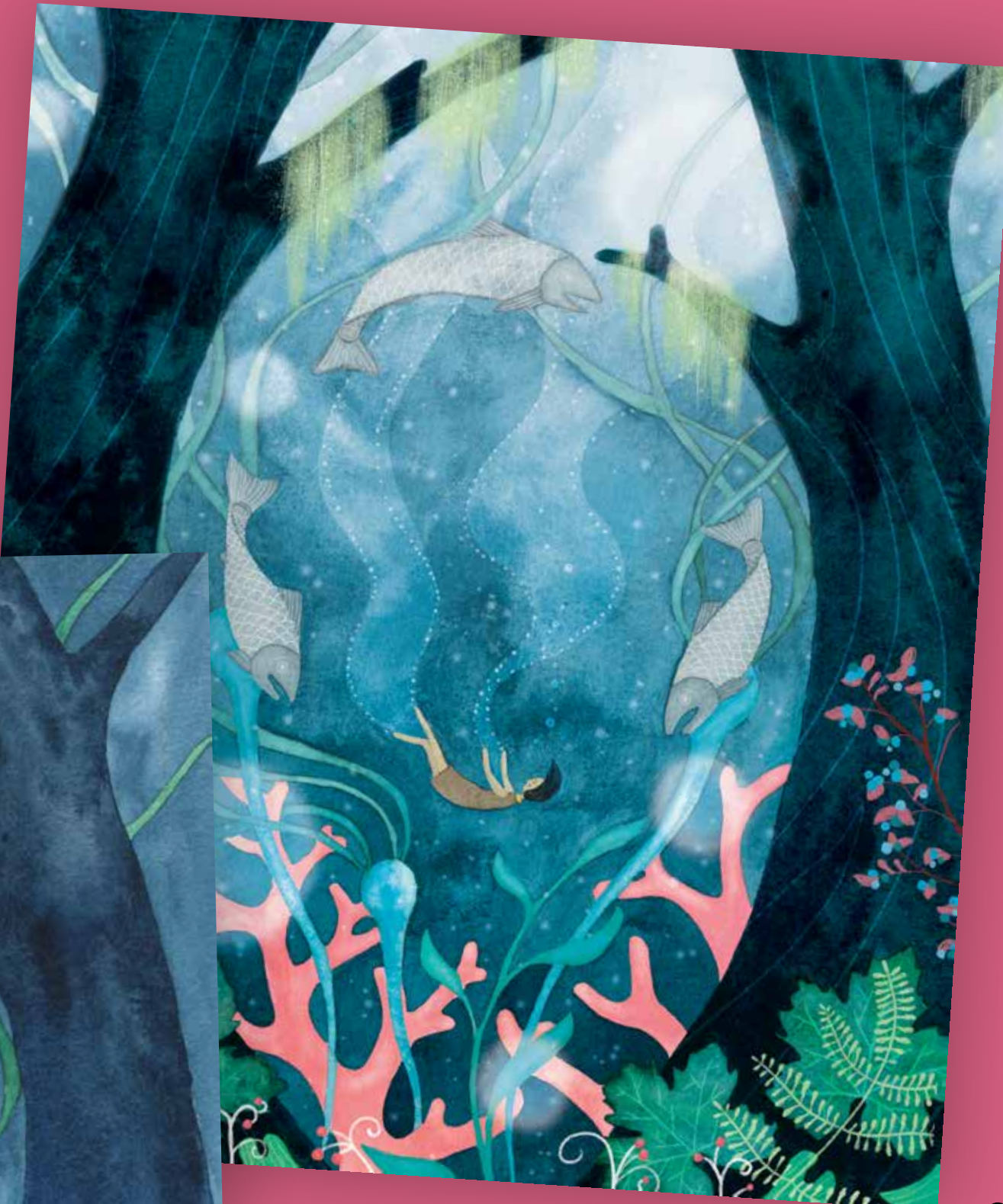
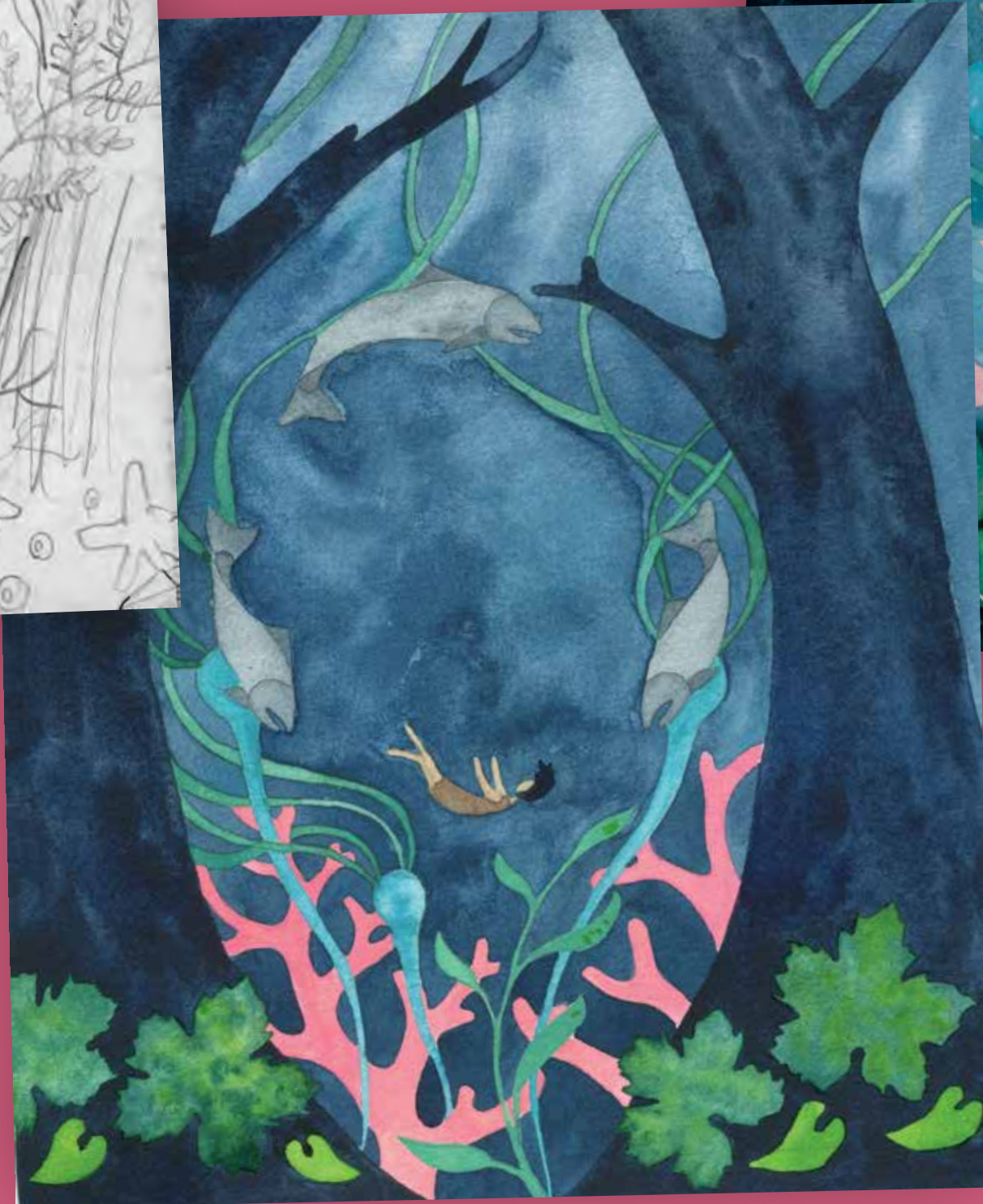
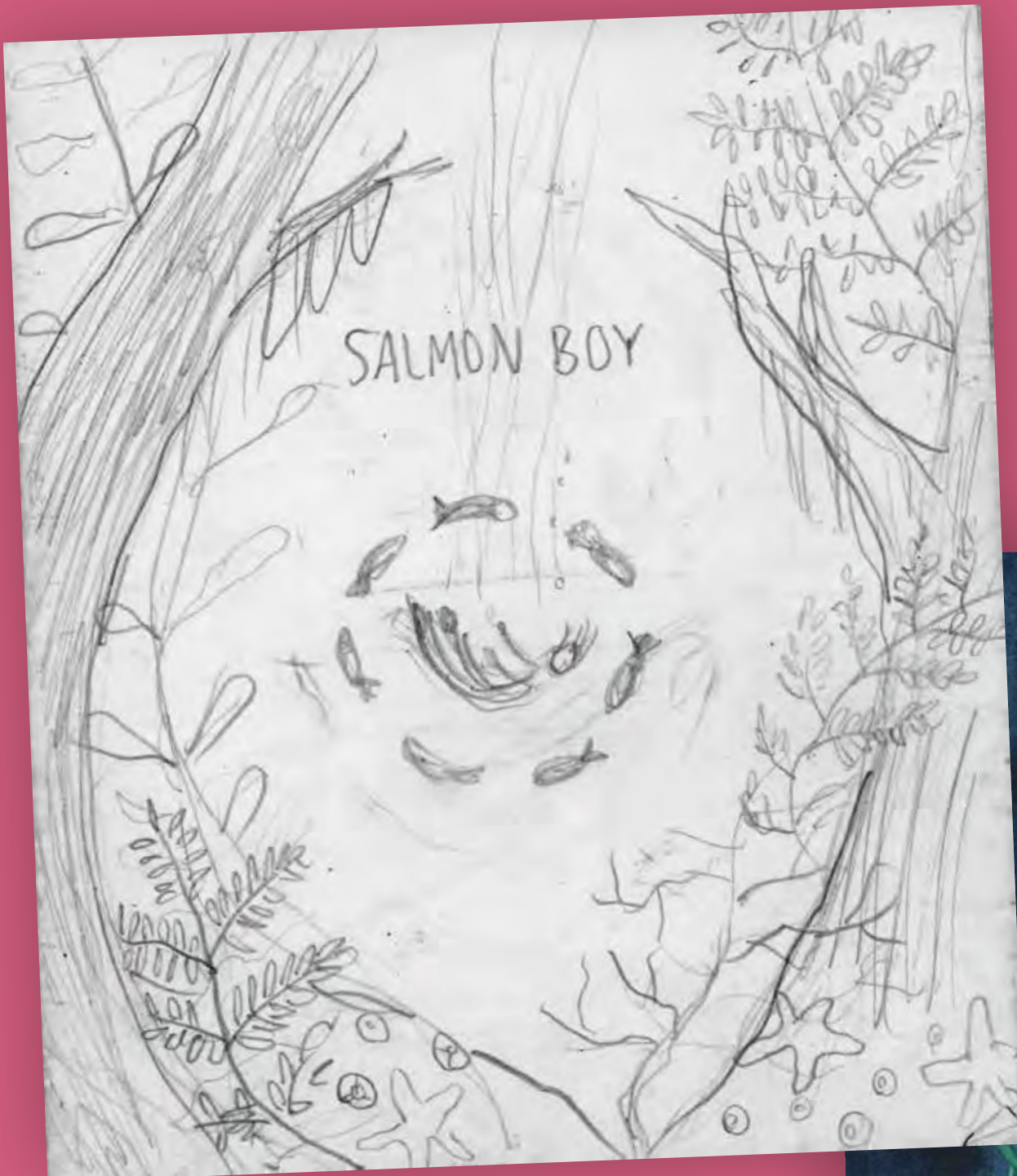




Cover from *Benny's Flag*
Jim Fowler

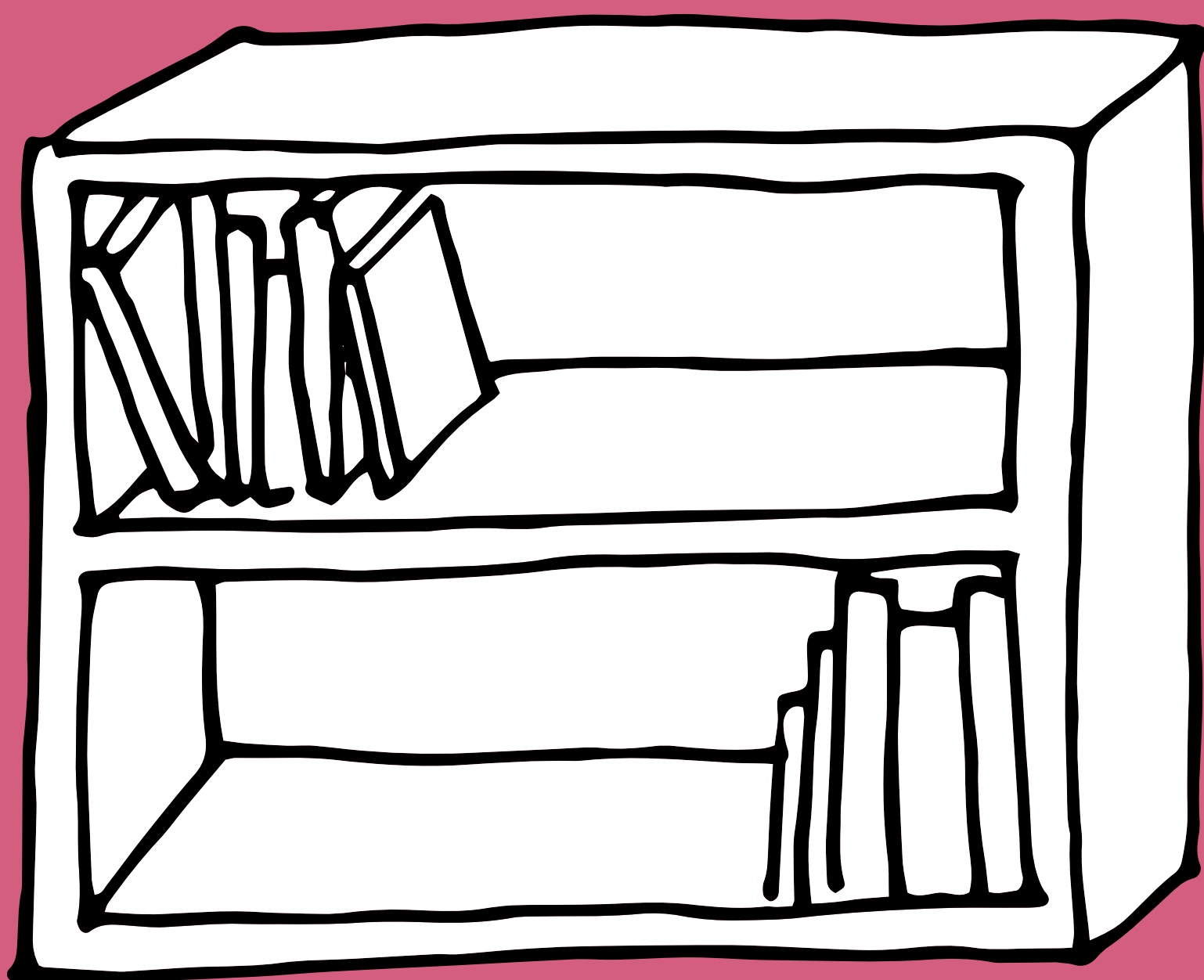
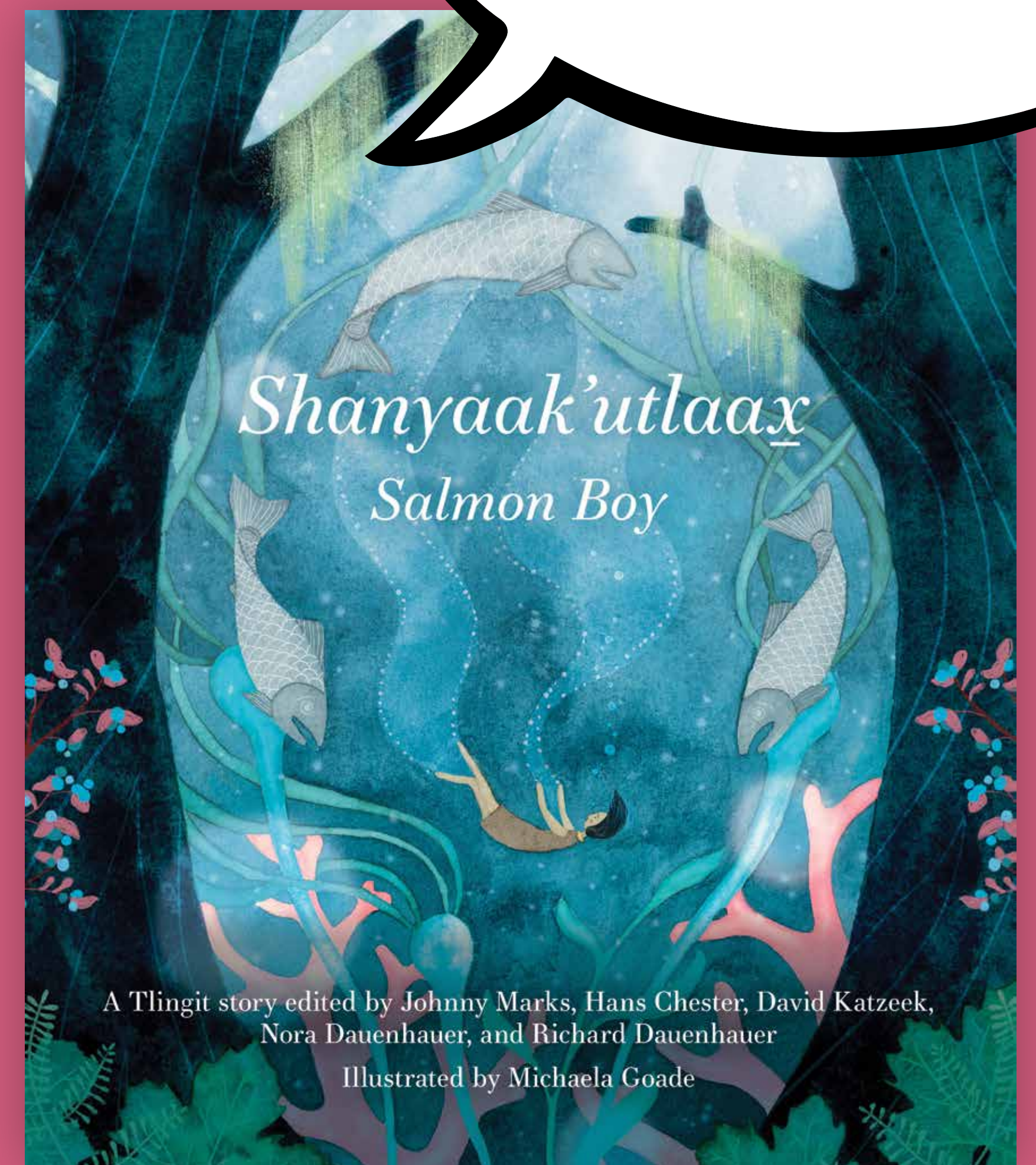
Cover sketch, final cover illustration, book cover
copy of pencil on paper, acrylic on paper, book

Michaela says...
"It's a crazy, stressful,
beautiful process."



Cover from
*Shanyaak'utlaax
Salmon Boy*
Michaela Goade

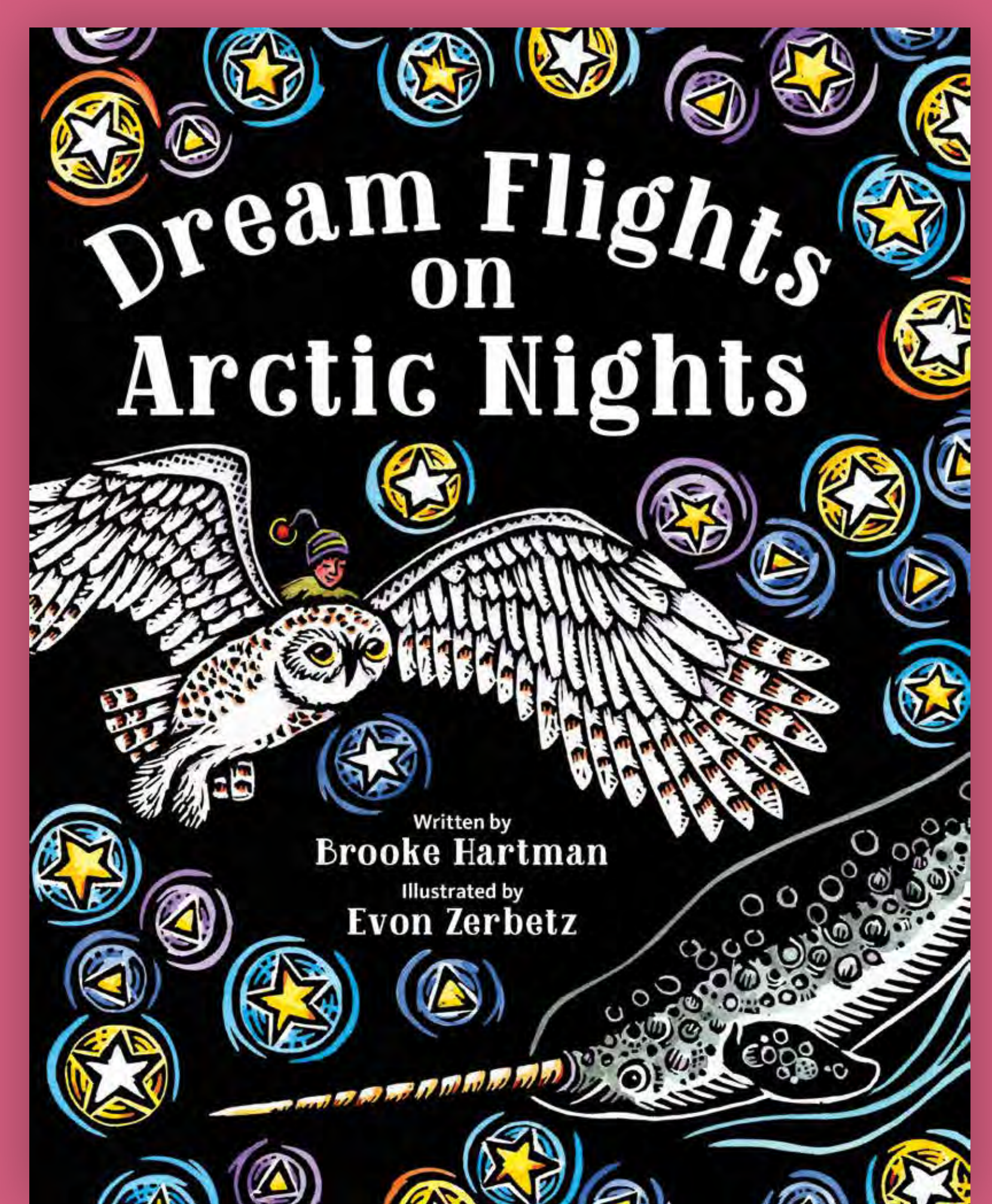
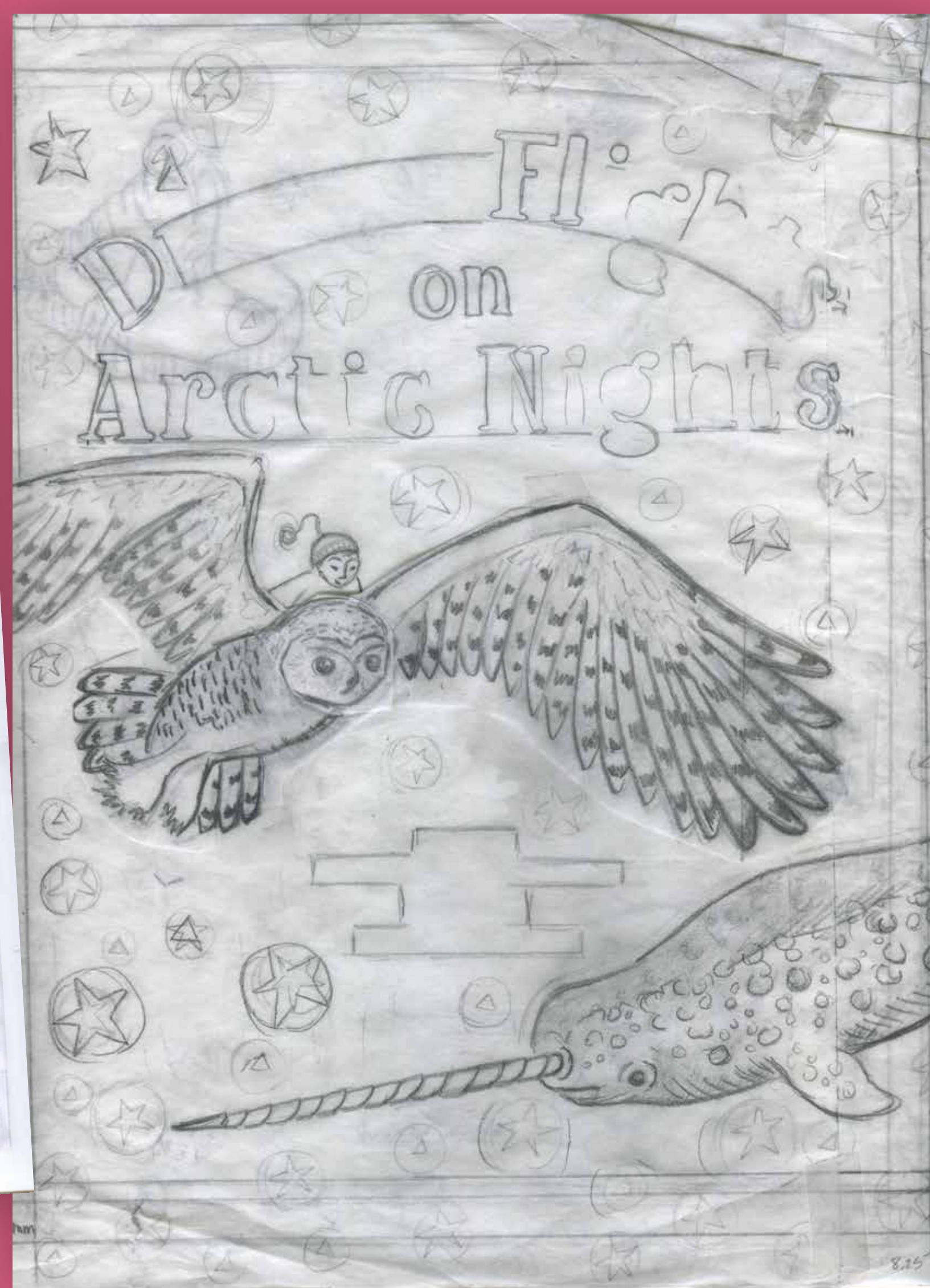
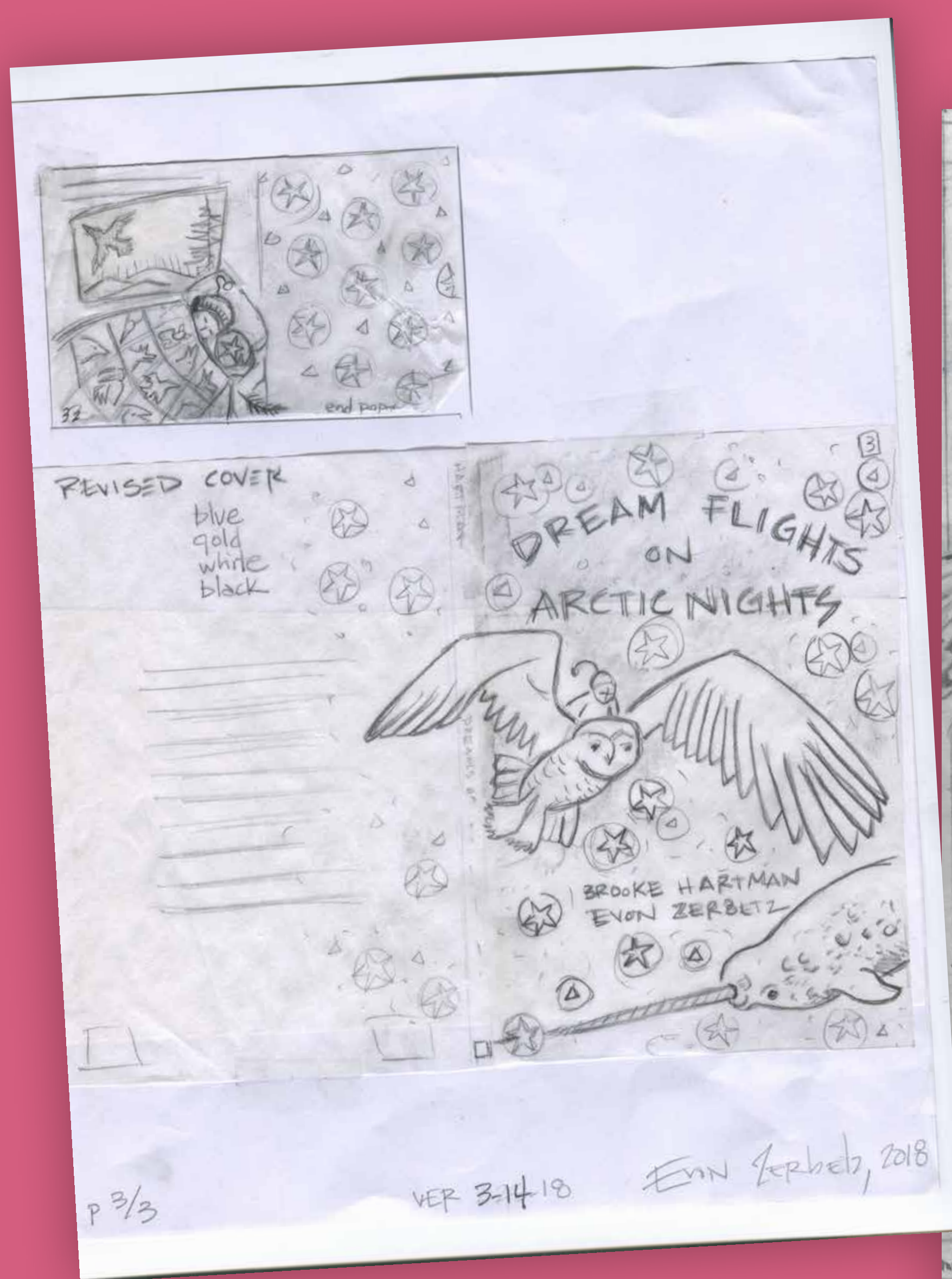
Cover sketch, final cover
illustration, book cover
pencil on paper, watercolor
on paper, book



THE COVER

The cover often has to come before the rest of the book is illustrated, because the publisher needs to prepare to sell the book to stores, before the book has even gone to the printer.

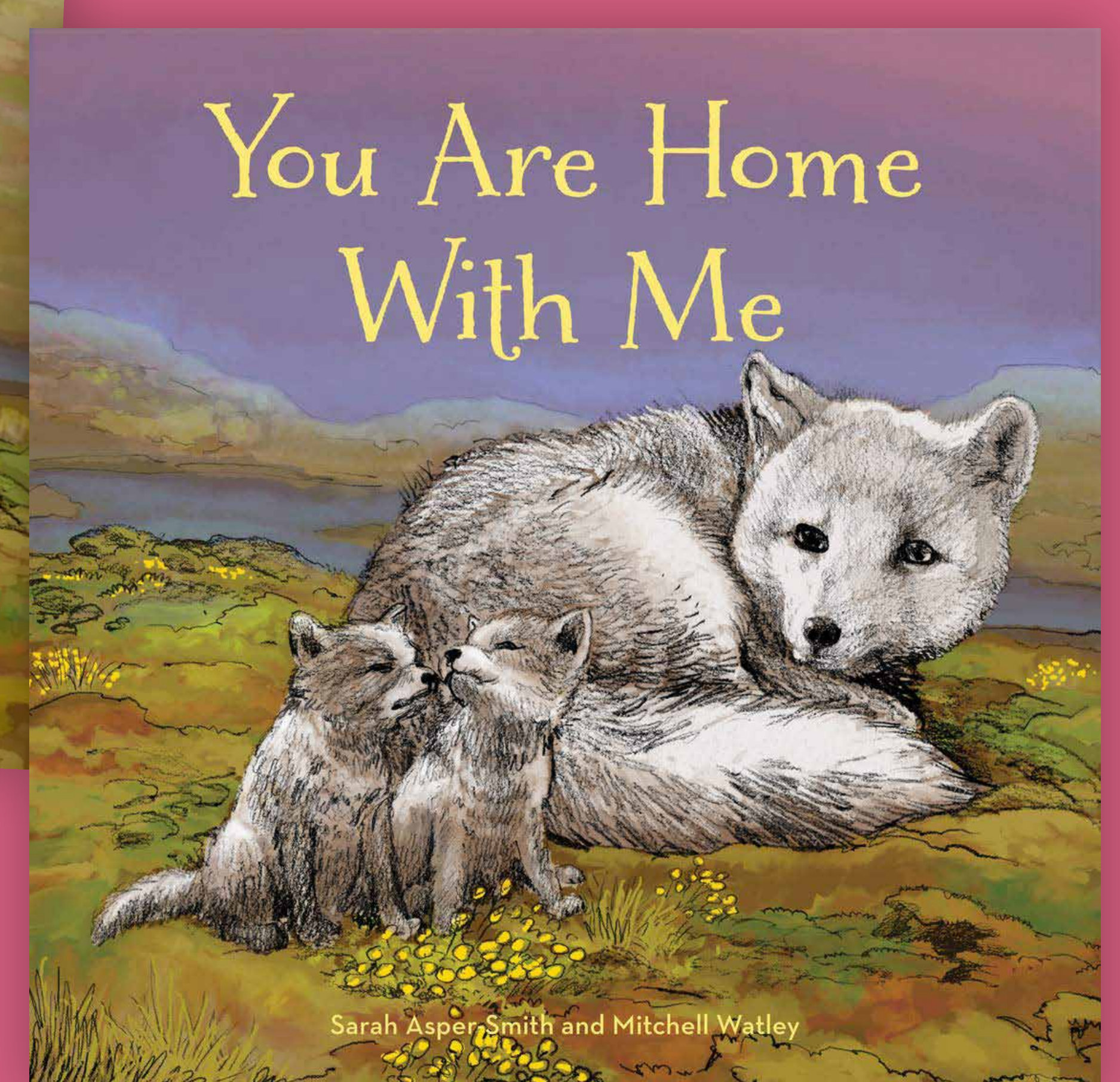
What did the artist have to think about when designing a cover?
Would it be a challenge to illustrate the cover before the story?



Cover sequence from
Dream Flights on Arctic Nights

Evon Zerbetz

Thumbnail sketch, cover sketch, final book
pencil on paper, book



Cover from *You Are Home With Me*
Mitch Watley

Cover sketches, digital illustration, book cover
pencil on paper, digital illustration, book



Art from *I Would Tuck You In*
Mitchell Watley
 Final print, digital sketches
 digital prints

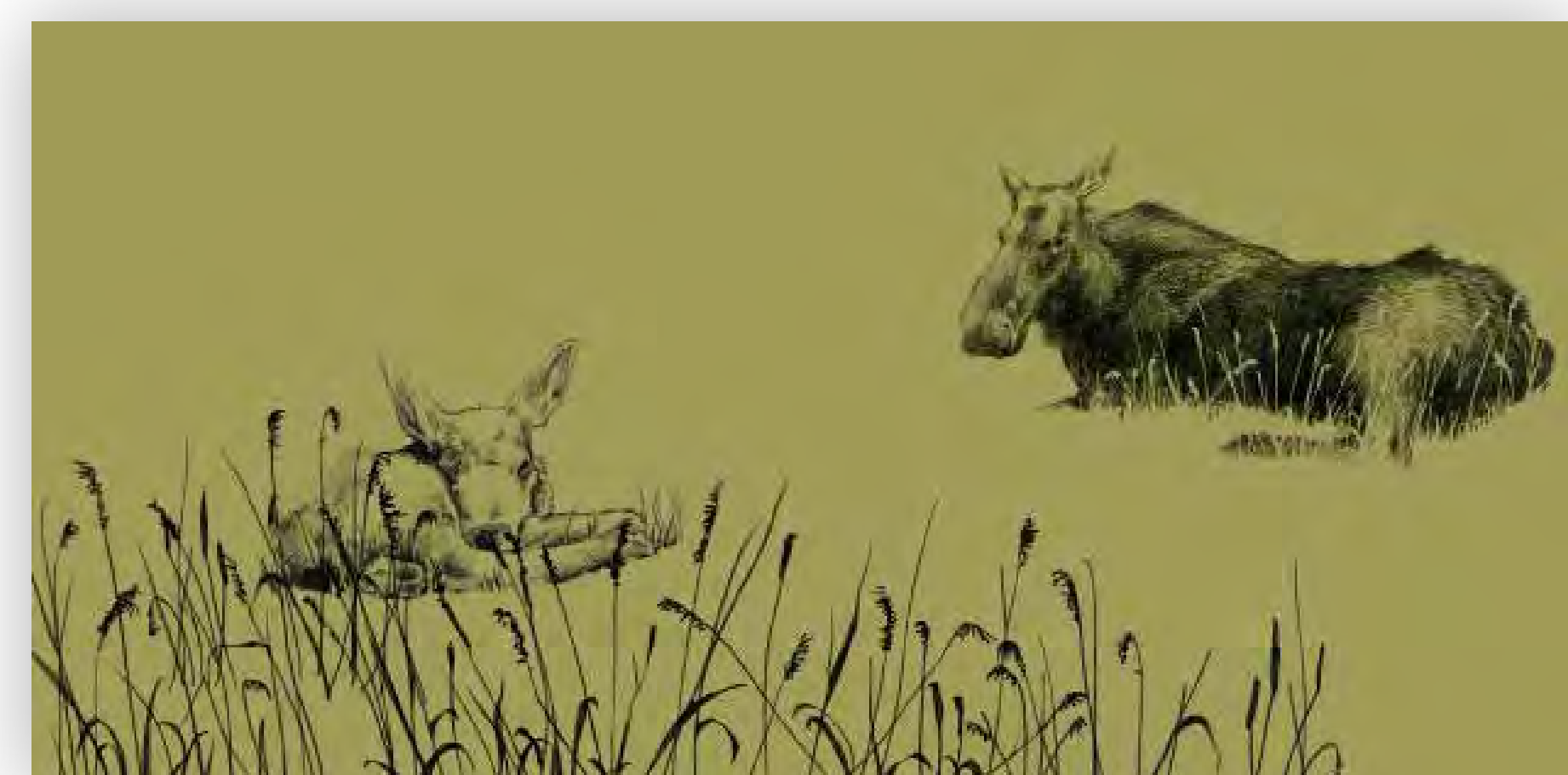
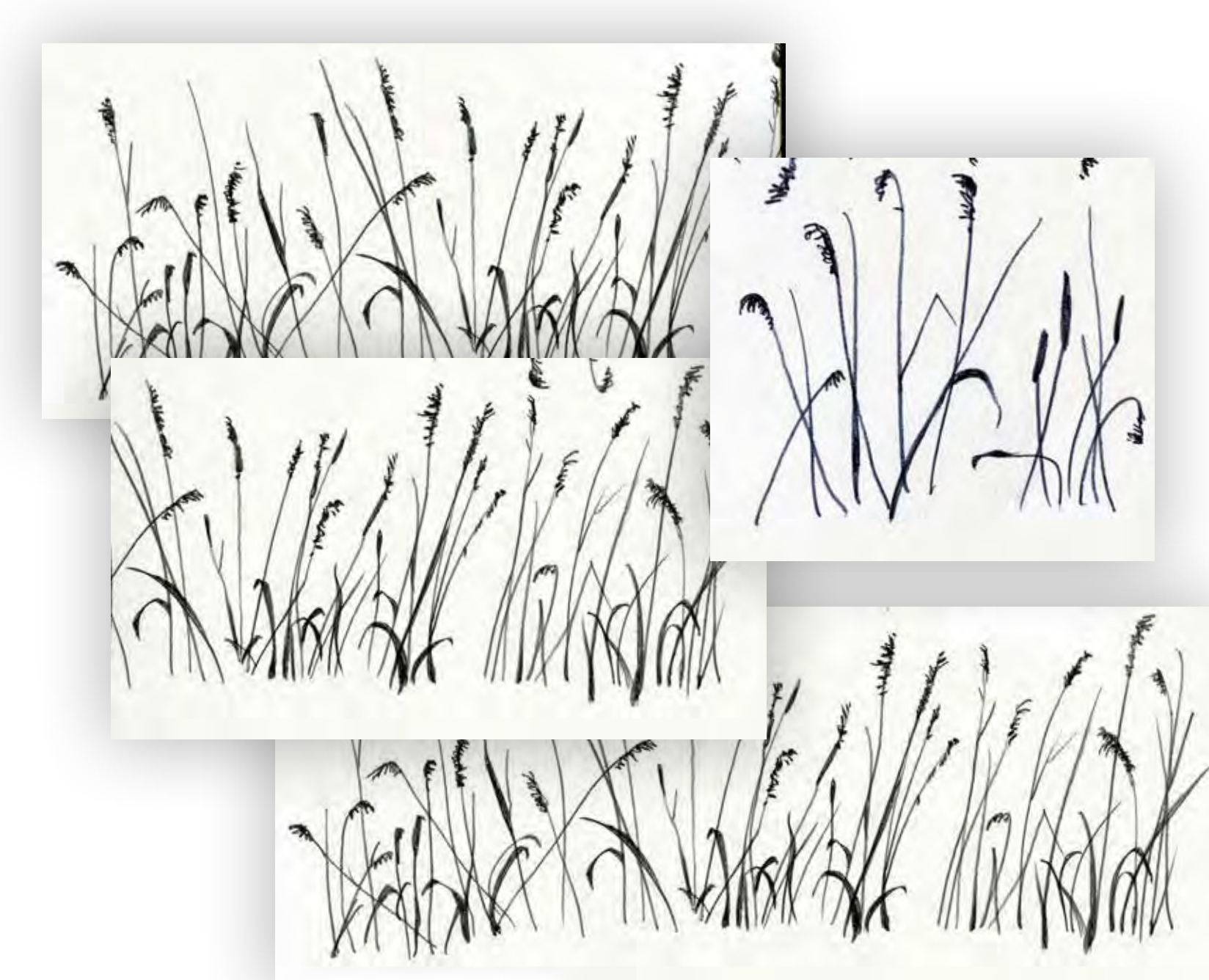


MITCH WATLEY

When Mitch Watley illustrates for books, he uses a combination of techniques. First, he sketches the scene on thick paper with a pencil. He then scans it into the computer. Sometimes it's perfect the way it is, and sometimes he needs to make some changes, or move something around. He uses a digital program to color the drawing. He can try different colors and textures and can erase what he doesn't like.

Mitch says...

"If you want to do something like this, something creative, make sure there's no free time. I was never bored as a kid because I felt like I always had work to do to get better. I wanted to impress my family and friends with the next idea or drawing."



Art from *You Are Home With Me*
Mitchell Watley
 Sketches, digital layout, final print
 pencil on paper, screenshot, digital print



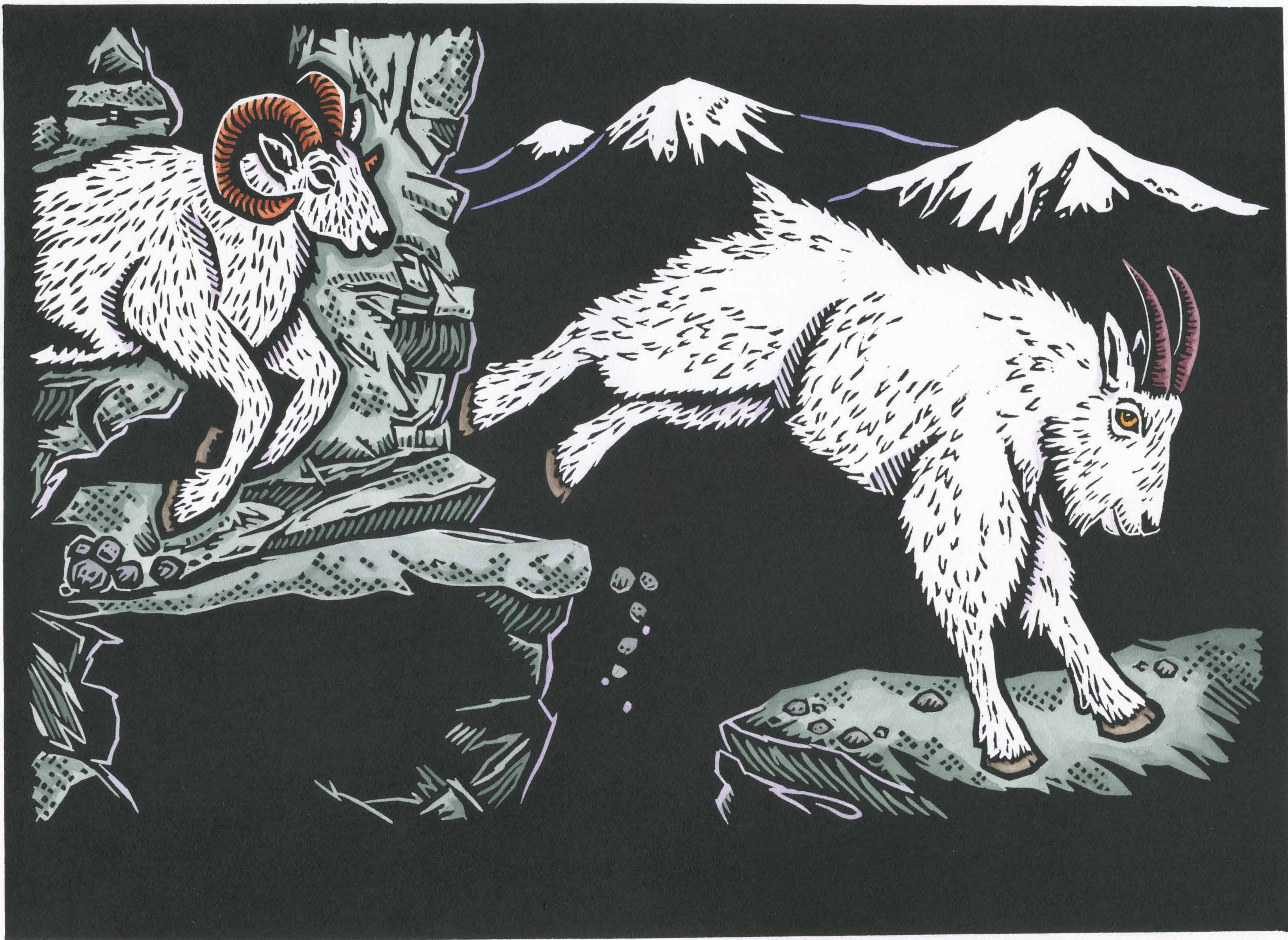
WORKSPACE

HIS TOOLS:
 pencils
 watercolor paper
 digital software
 tablet with a stylus



Sketch of My Studio
Mitch Watley
 pen on paper





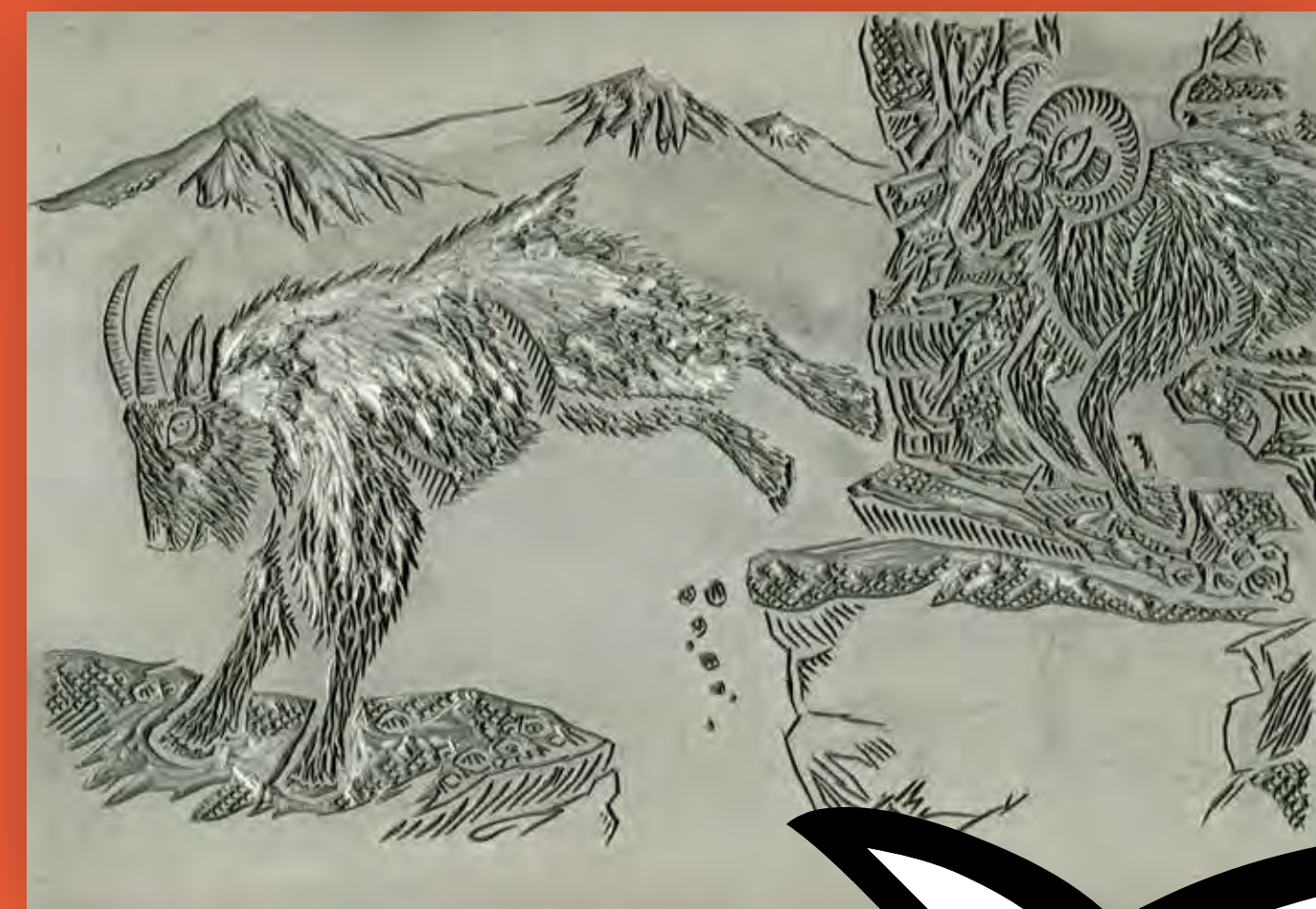
EVON ZERBETZ

Evon Zerbetz uses linoleum to illustrate books. But long before she cuts into that material, she has made many, many sketches to decide the perfect perspective for the art piece. Once she has the right composition, she carves the scene in linoleum. She inks the carved block and cranks it through her etching press to make a print on paper. She might add color to the image after the ink dries.



Art from *Dream Flights on Arctic Nights: "Daring Leap"*
Evon Zerbetz

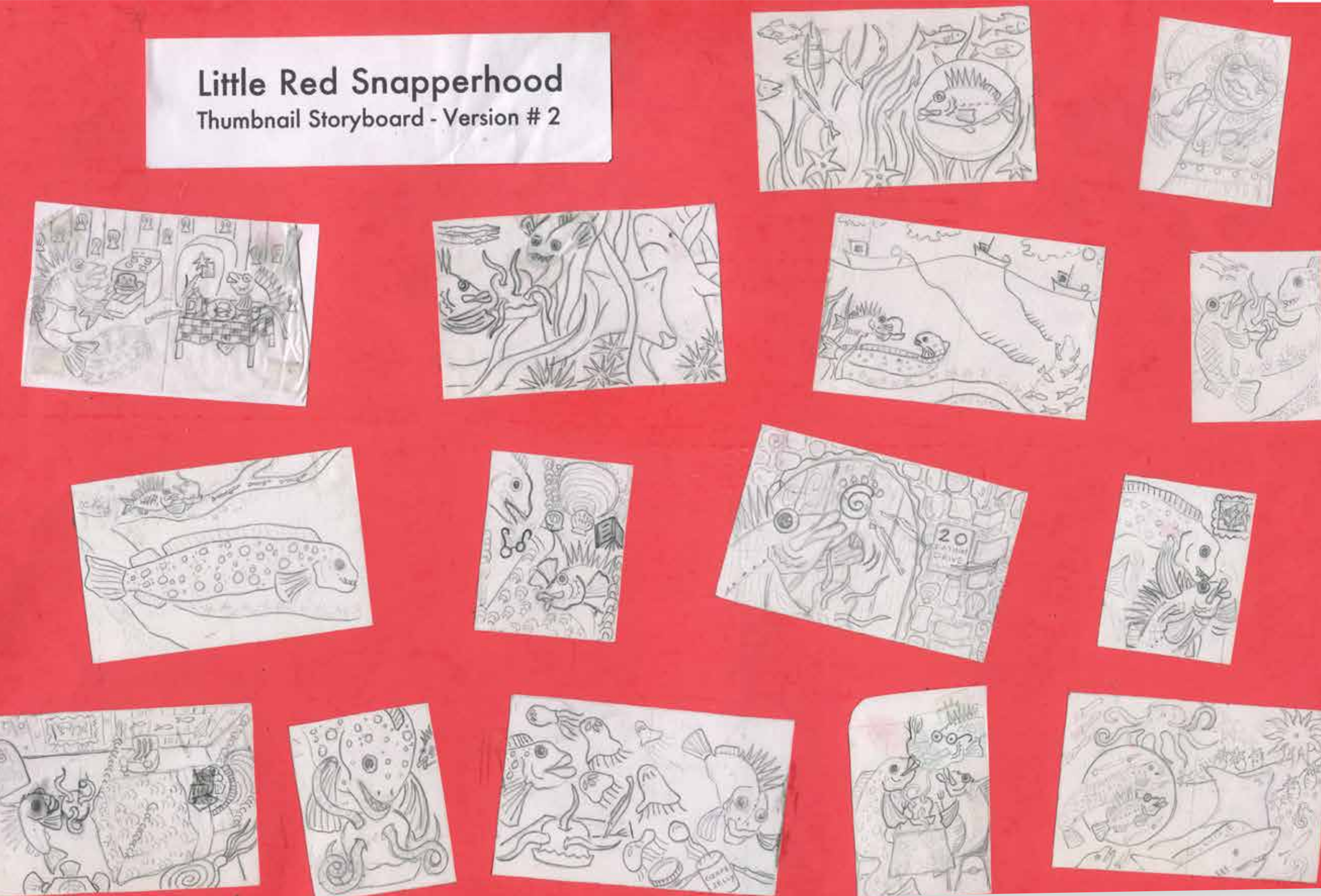
Thumbnail sketch storyboard, sketches, linoleum block, final print
pencil on paper, linoleum, ink on paper, colored pencil



Evon says...

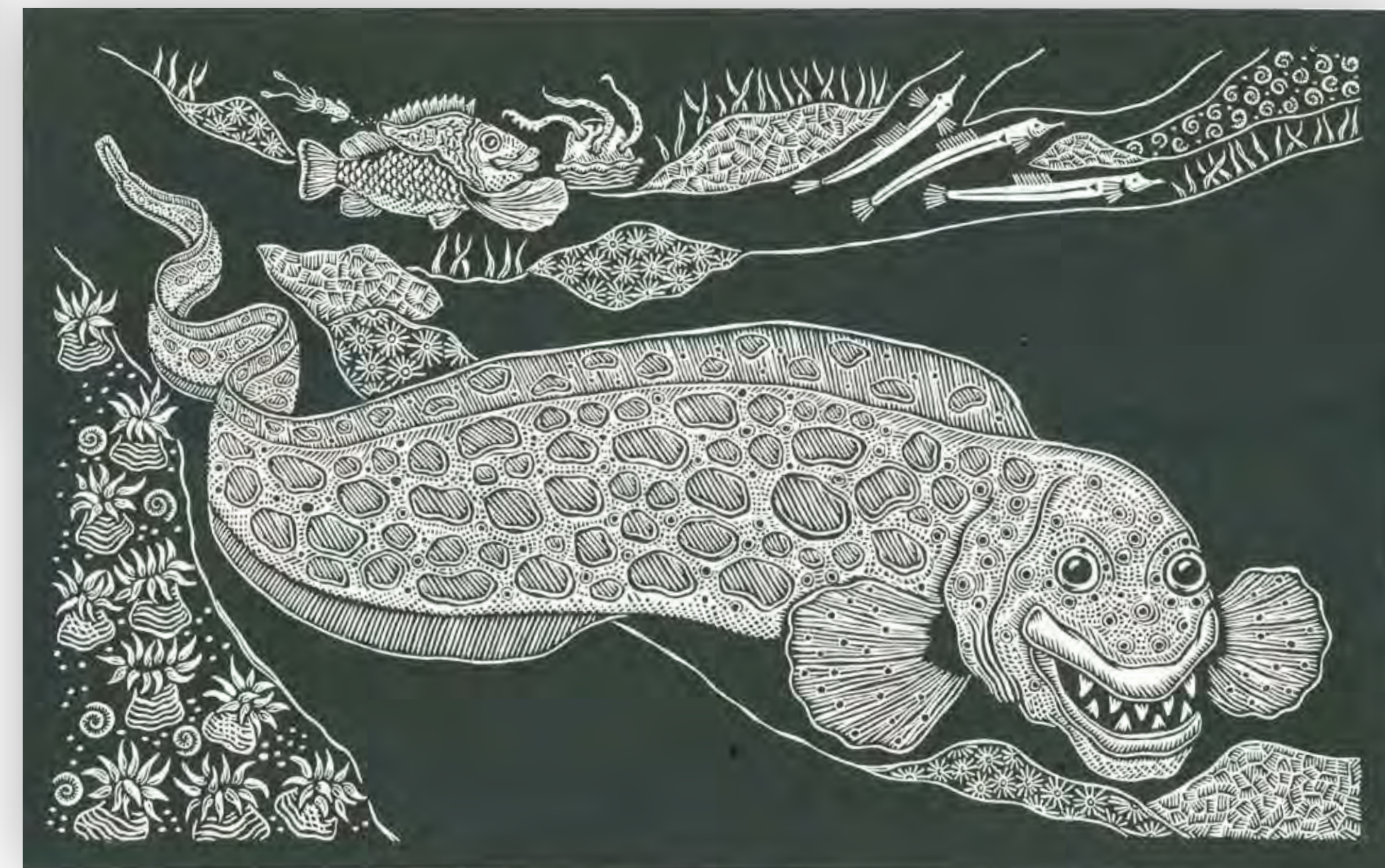
"My thumbnails typically capture the idea that you will see in the final page. But there are always a few images that undergo a number of revisions before the page is nailed. That is why illustrators often start small with thumbnail sketches to work out a lot of ideas quickly."

Little Red Snapperhood
Thumbnail Storyboard - Version # 2



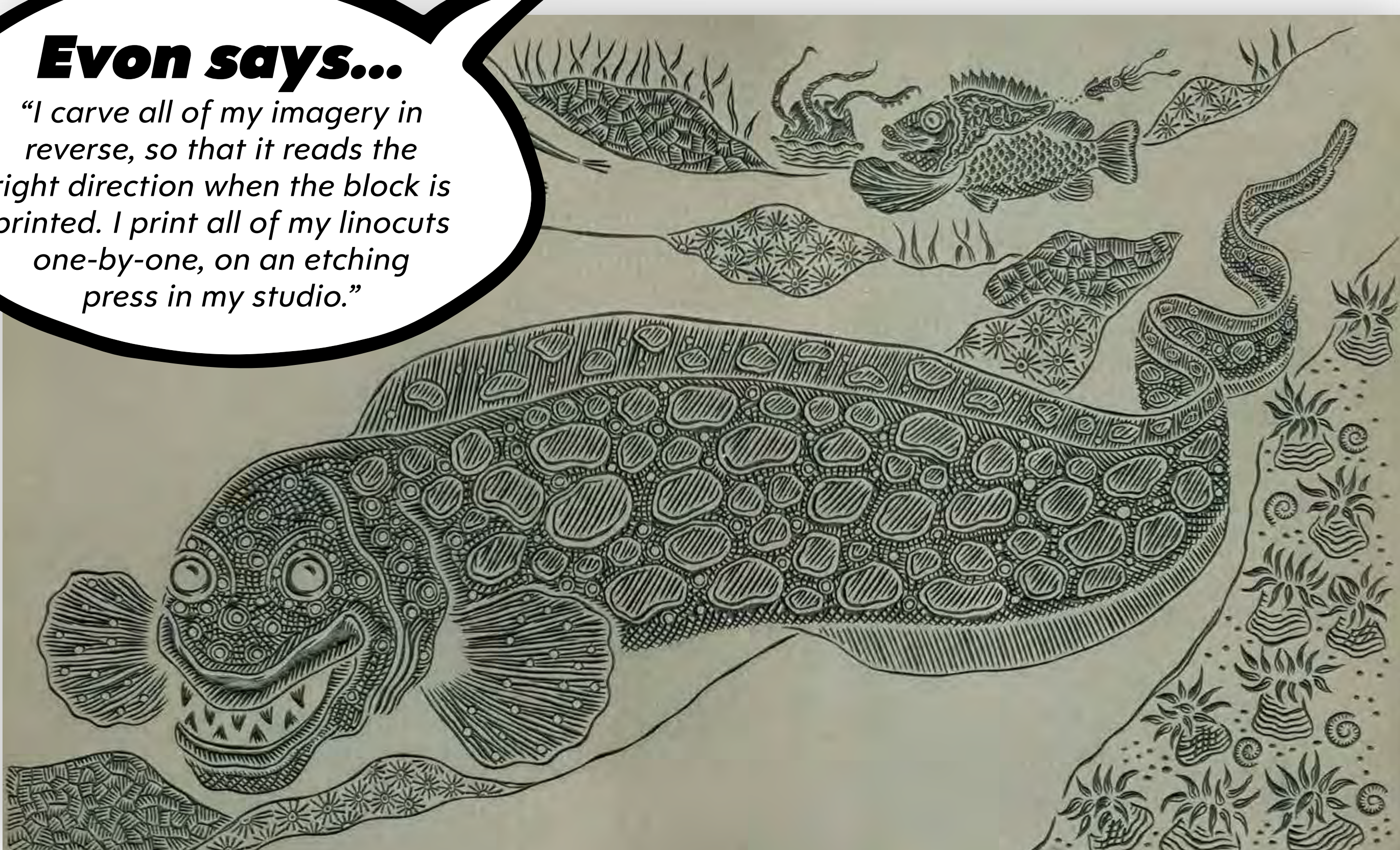
Art from *Little Red Snapperhood*
by Neal Gilbertsen
Evon Zerbetz

Thumbnail storyboard, sketch for Wolf Eel,
Linoleum block, black and white linocut print,
final linocut print
pencil on paper, linoleum, ink and colored pencil
on paper



Evon says...

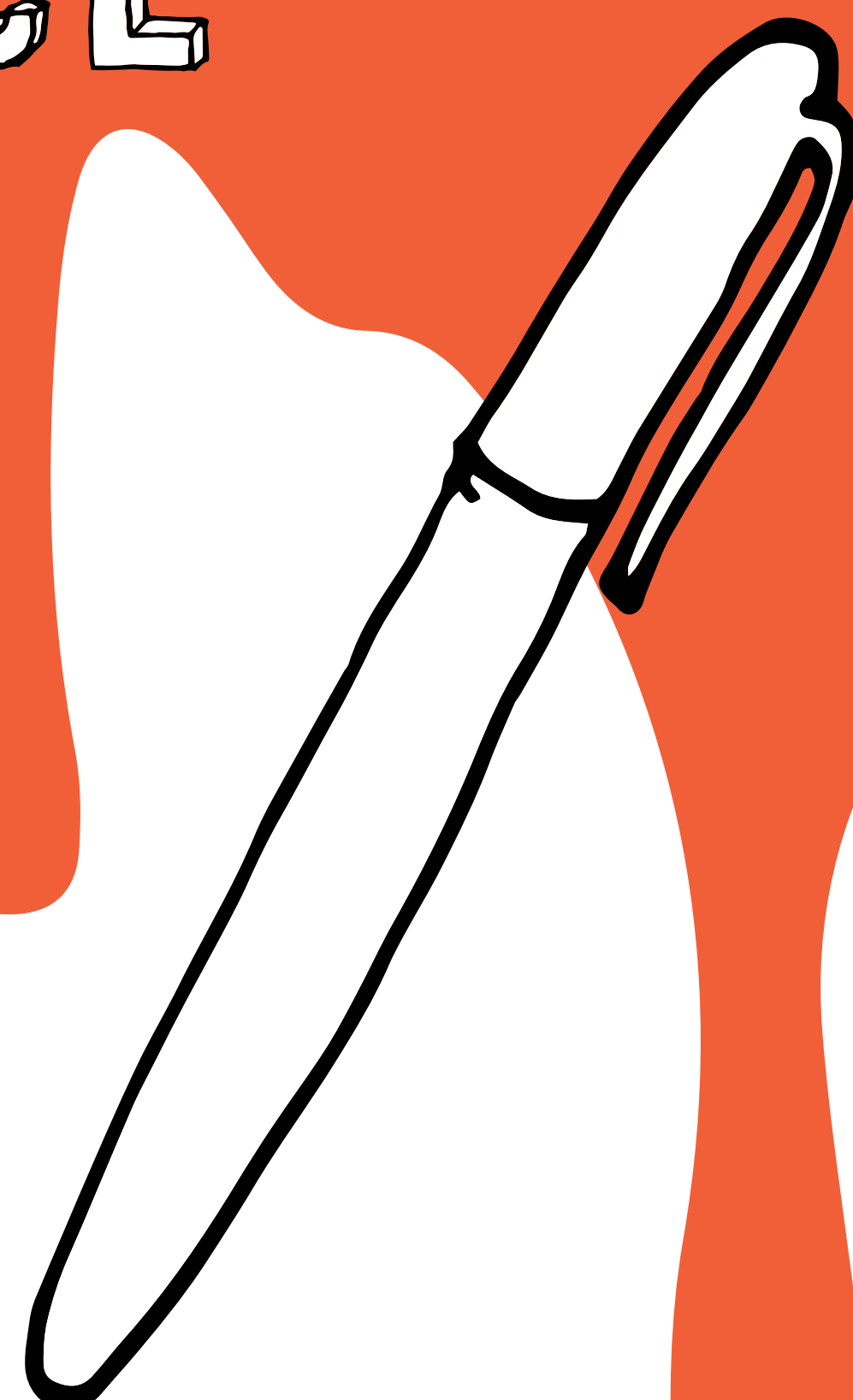
"I carve all of my imagery in reverse, so that it reads the right direction when the block is printed. I print all of my linocuts one-by-one, on an etching press in my studio."



WORKSPACE

HER TOOLS:

paper
pencils
linoleum
knives
brayers (rollers)
ink



Sketch of My Studio
Evon Zerbetz

linocut print



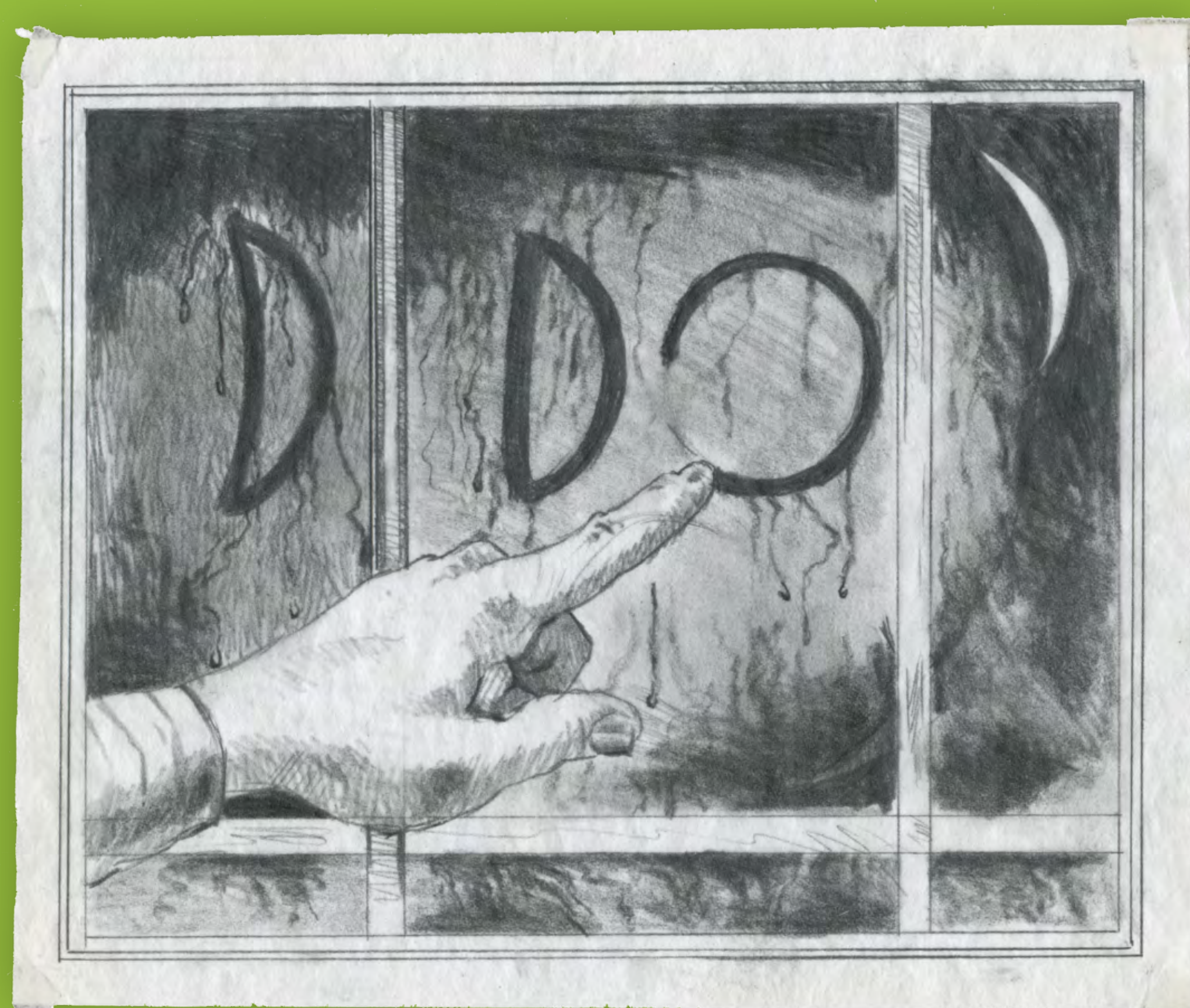


Sequence from
I'll See You When the Moon is Full
Jim Fowler

Final, acrylic on paper

JIM FOWLER

When Jim Fowler works in his studio, he starts with pencil sketches. Once he has the right layout for the illustration, he paints with acrylic. Sometimes an idea comes to him in an unexpected way. While doing dishes one cold evening, he was wondering how to illustrate the phases of the moon in the book *I'll See You When the Moon is Full*. The steam from the hot dish water built up on the window and made him think of an idea. See how he uses that idea in this illustration.



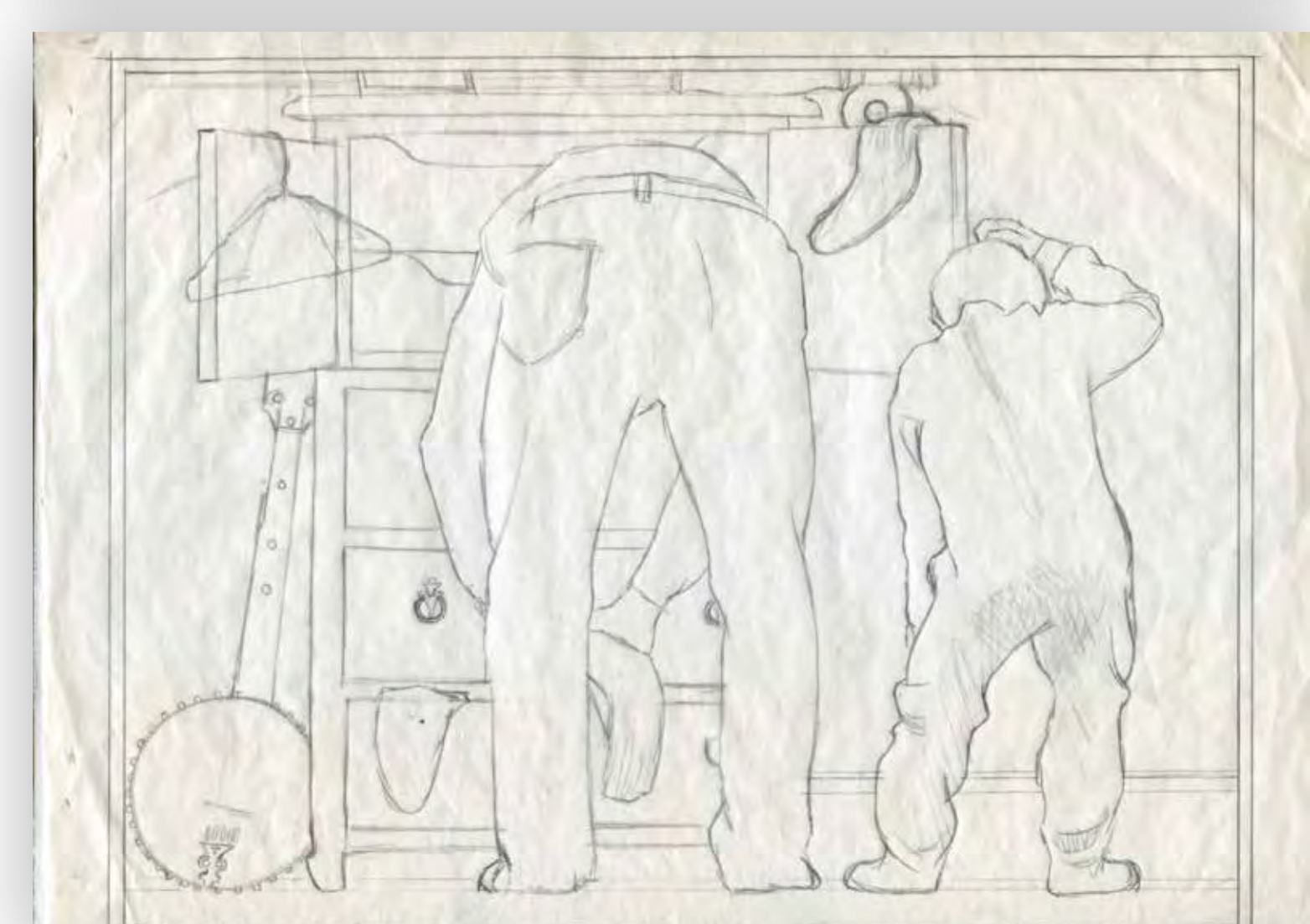
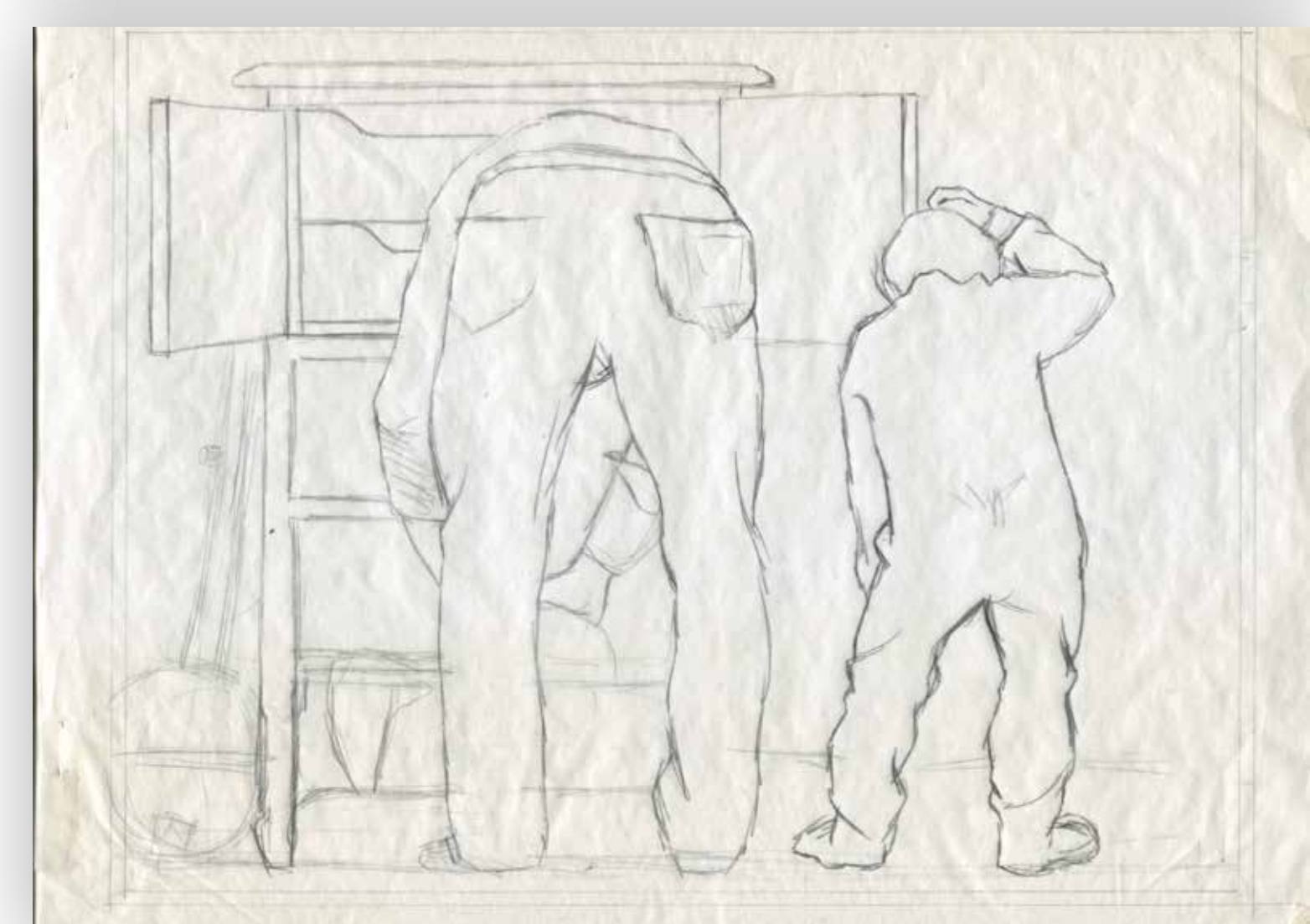
Sequence from *I'll See You When the Moon is Full*
Jim Fowler

Sketch, pencil on paper

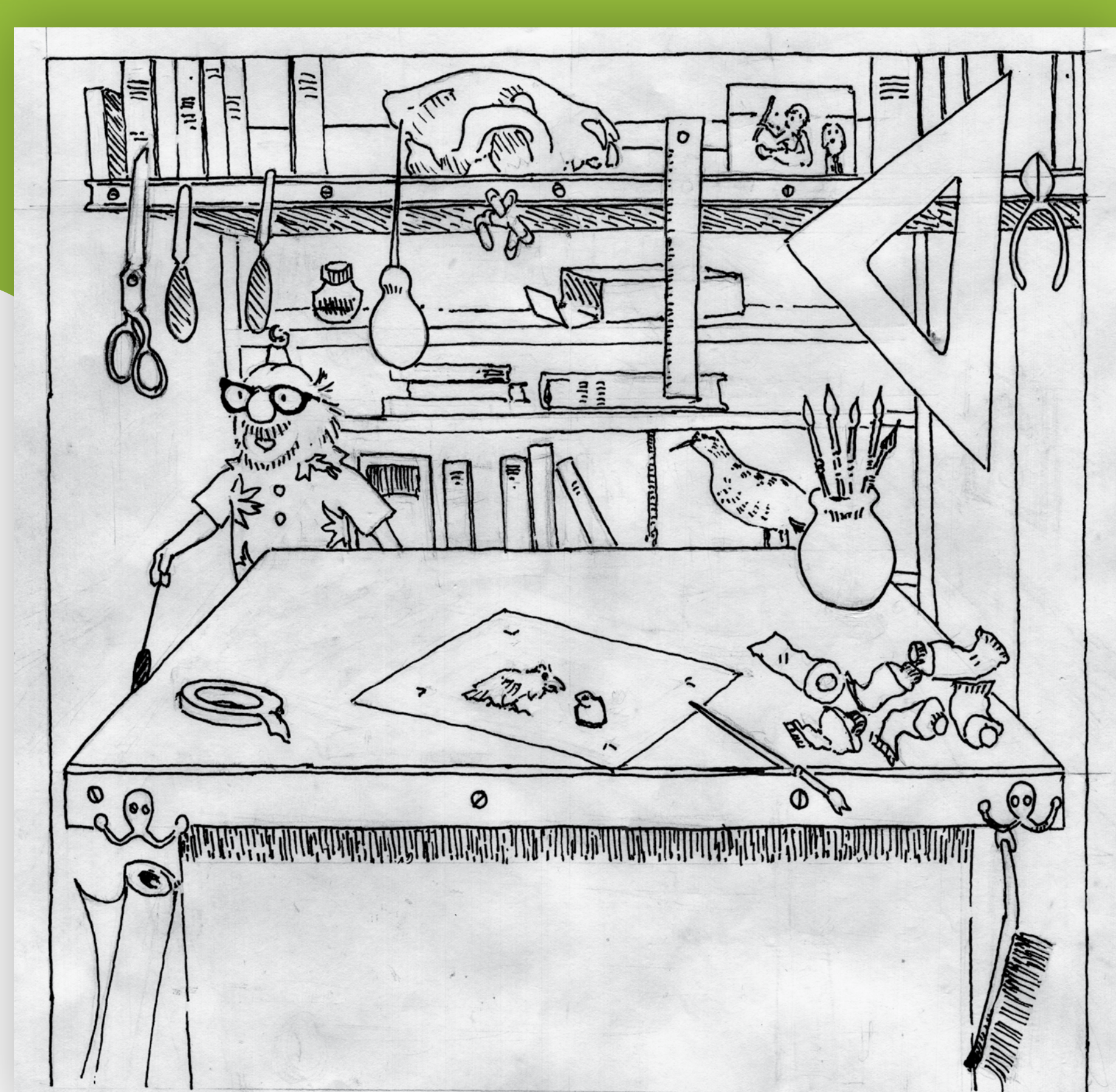


Sequence from
I'll See You When the Moon is Full
Jim Fowler

Sketches, final
pencil on paper, acrylic on paper



WORKSPACE



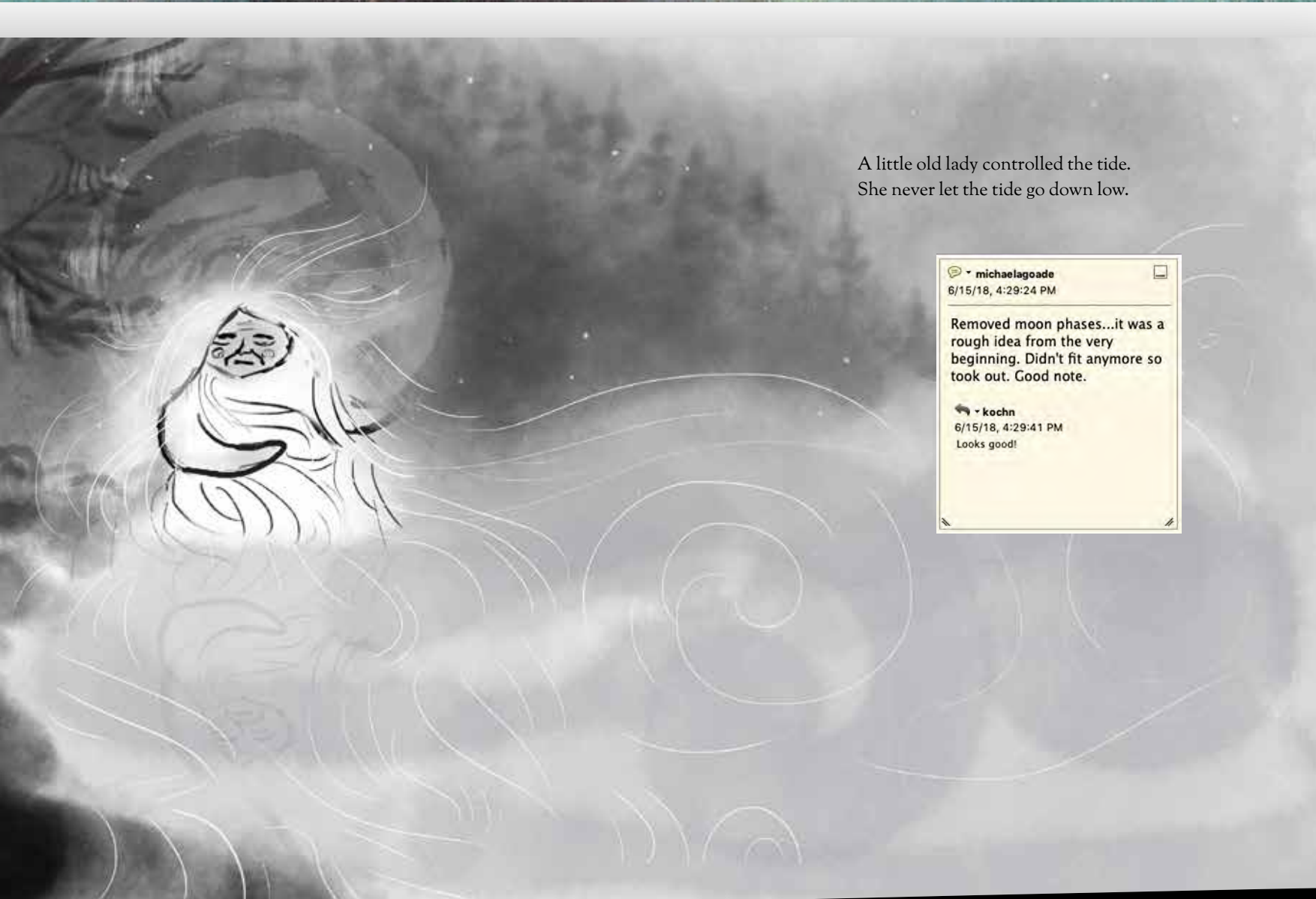
Sketch of My Studio
Jim Fowler

pen on paper

HIS TOOLS:

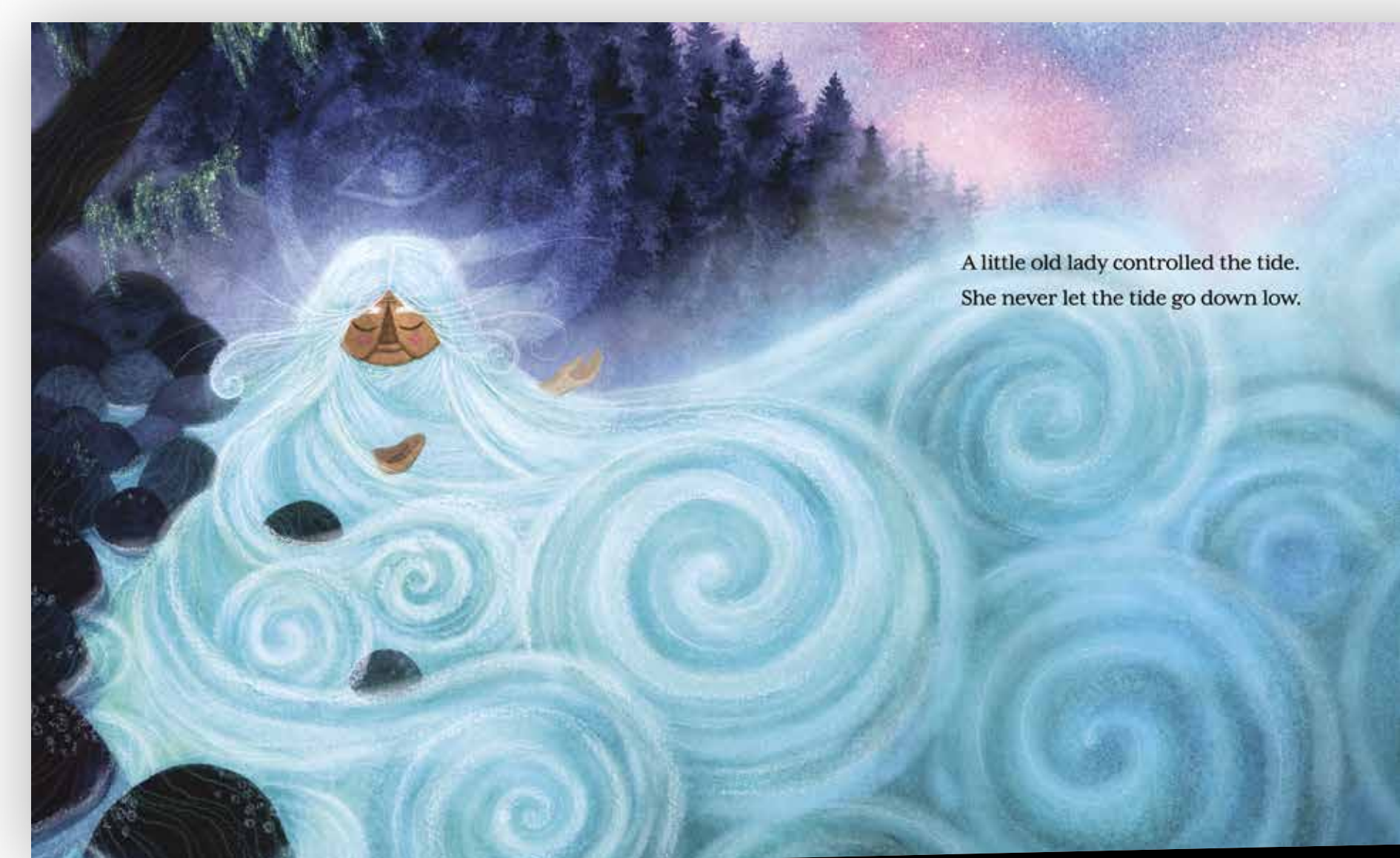
paper
pencils
paint
brushes
easel





Sequence from
*Raven and the Tide
Lady*
Michaela Goade

Final watercolor, value sketch,
color story, final pages
Watercolors on paper, digital



MICHAELA GOADE

Michaela Goade uses a variety of tools to illustrate. She starts with sketches—loose and general. She wants to see where the different pieces of the story will fit. Then she draws her chosen sketch on watercolor paper, and colors it in. She mixes many different colors before she finds the right one. Once the watercolors are finished, she'll often add in details with colored pencils, pastels and gouache paint. When she is ready to make finishing touches, she scans her artwork and edits on a computer. She might add a face, or adjust the colors, or create white lines to indicate waves. When she's done, the file is sent digitally to the publisher.

Michaela says...

"While it can seem like magic, it's a job with many steps."



Sequence from
Shanyaak'utlaax: Salmon Boy
Michaela Goade

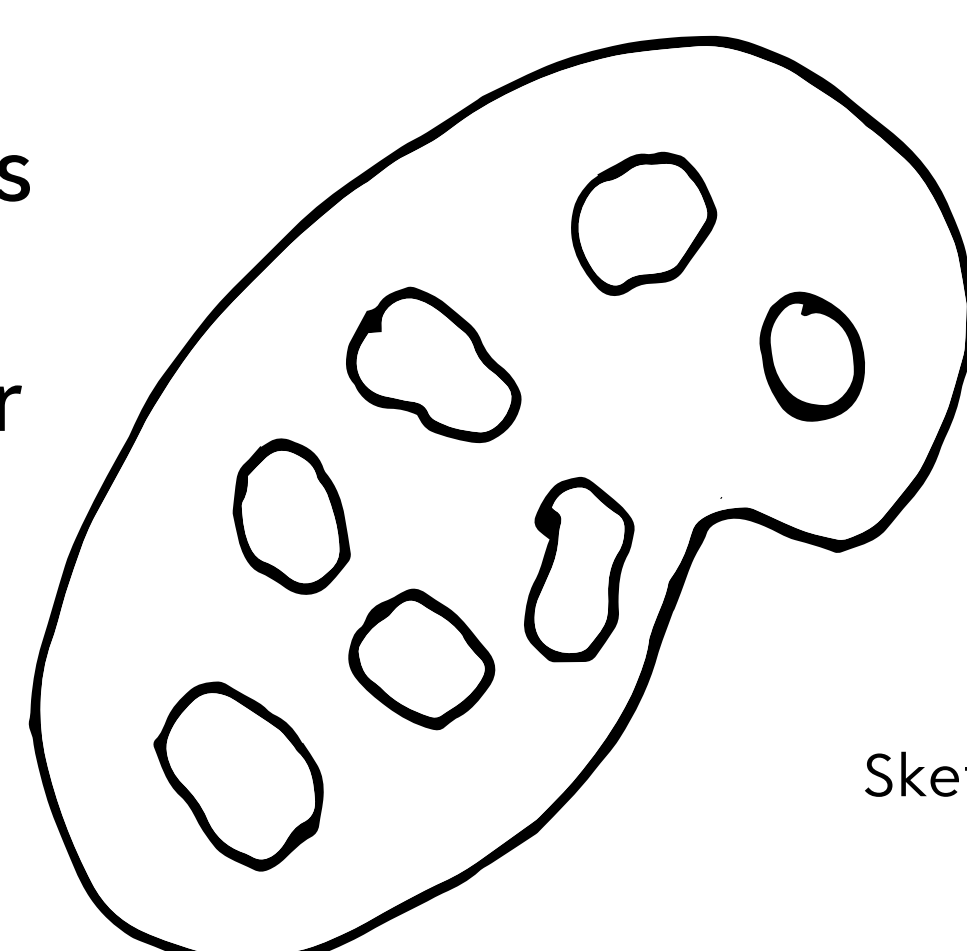
Dummy sketch, final watercolor, final art
Pencil on paper, watercolor on paper, digital



WORKSPACE

HER TOOLS:

paper
pencil
watercolor paints
gouache paints
watercolor paper
computer
tablet



Sketch of My Studio
Michaela Goade

digital illustration

